

Saipan Tribune

CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XIV, Issue No. 132

TUESDAY MAY 11, 2004

www.saipantribune.com 50¢

INSIDE



Court Martial

Stung by a worldwide outcry, the U.S. military Sunday announced the first court-martial in the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse allegations, ordering a reservist to face a public trial in Baghdad on May 19.

Page 13



Bloody Polls

Scattered violence hit the Philippines as voters cast ballots for president Monday, a race pitting an incumbent who strongly backs the U.S. war on terror against a film star whose close friend lost the job in disgrace three years ago.

Page 15



Deadly Blast

A bomb ripped through a stadium in the Chechen capital during a Victory Day ceremony on Sunday, killing provincial president Akhmad Kadyrov, the Kremlin's point man for efforts to control separatist violence in the war-wracked region.

Page 17

Kagman schools shut down

Lack of water forces schools' closure

By SHAN SEMAN
REPORTER



EDITH G. ALEJANDRO

COOL MALLARDS

Hard Rock Café executive chef Kotwal Singh connects with the students of the Garapan Elementary School during the social development tour at the restaurant Thursday in relation to the HRC's Cool School Kids program. The GES is the part school that toured the Hard Rock and DFS for this year's project.

'Labor changes unconstitutional'

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO
REPORTER

The proposed changes in the Alien Workers Act of 2004 would result in the unconstitutional impairment of the right of nonresident workers to seek redress for legitimate grievances. The passage of this measure would, therefore, send a negative impression to the U.S. Congress and could affect the ongoing bid of

the Northern Marianas for a non-voting delegate status to the U. S House of Representatives, according to the U.S. Labor Ombudsman Office on Saipan.

Federal Ombudsman Jim Benedetto pointed out that, in the February oversight hearing held by the U.S. House Committee on Resources, subcommittee members had sought assurances that the CNMI is working to address its labor and immigration problems, particularly those

affecting the 30,000 nonresident workers in the Commonwealth.

"We do not wish to send a message to Congress that the progress made to date is tenuous, at best, and that further reform will be at the expense of the nonresident workers. To send that message this time would be very unfortunate because I do not believe it is the intent of the CNMI House of Representatives to roll back re-

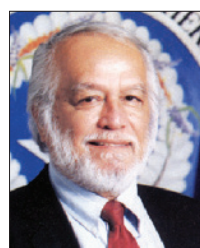
See LABOR on Page 8

Case rekindles Stanley-Pam Brown tiff

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

The court hearing on ex-congressman Stanley Torres' request to annul the summons and criminal information charging him for allegedly hiring a ghost employee when he was still in office has reopened the conflict between him and Attorney General Pamela Brown.

Lawyers for Torres and his co-defendants, former legislative staff Dorothy



Torres



Brown

Sablan and Frank S. Ada, asked the court to quash the charging documents because

they do not carry the name of the attorney general. Deputy Attorney General Clyde Lemons Jr. and CNMI chief prosecutor David Hutton—not Brown—signed the charging documents.

Hutton said the defense's insistence on the necessity of putting the name of the attorney general in the charging documents would lead to a "Stanley Torres versus Pam Brown" scenario.

Former attorney general Robert Tor-

See CASE on Page 8

Students at Kagman Elementary School and Cha Cha Oceanview Junior High School had shortened classes yesterday as school officials found it necessary to close the schools due to lack of water.

According to Kagman Elementary School principal Ignacia Demapan, she needed to send the students home as the lack of water provided unsafe environments for the children and employees. The students were sent home at 1pm.

"We had students and employees who needed to use the restrooms, and with no water, the toilets can't be operational. The restrooms aren't clean and were unhygienic," she said.

Board of Education chairman Roman C. Benavente was reached concerning the issue, but said that he wasn't aware of the situation.

Demapan said the school's water supply comes from a 33-thousand-gallon tank and a water pump, but without a certain amount of water in the tank, the pump won't be able to feed water into the system.

"The tank was empty and it needs to be full or at a certain level for the pump to operate," she said. "We tried to rectify the problem, but we just couldn't get enough water. The water pump was burned out and the water pressure was just very slow."

It was not immediately known how soon the water supply would normalize.

The principal said the problem usually occurs whenever there are power outages in the area.

See KAGMAN on Page 8

NMC students: Forget La Fiesta

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

Although they support the concept behind the Pacific Gateway project, Northern Marianas College students think that authorities should just forget about La Fiesta as its venue.

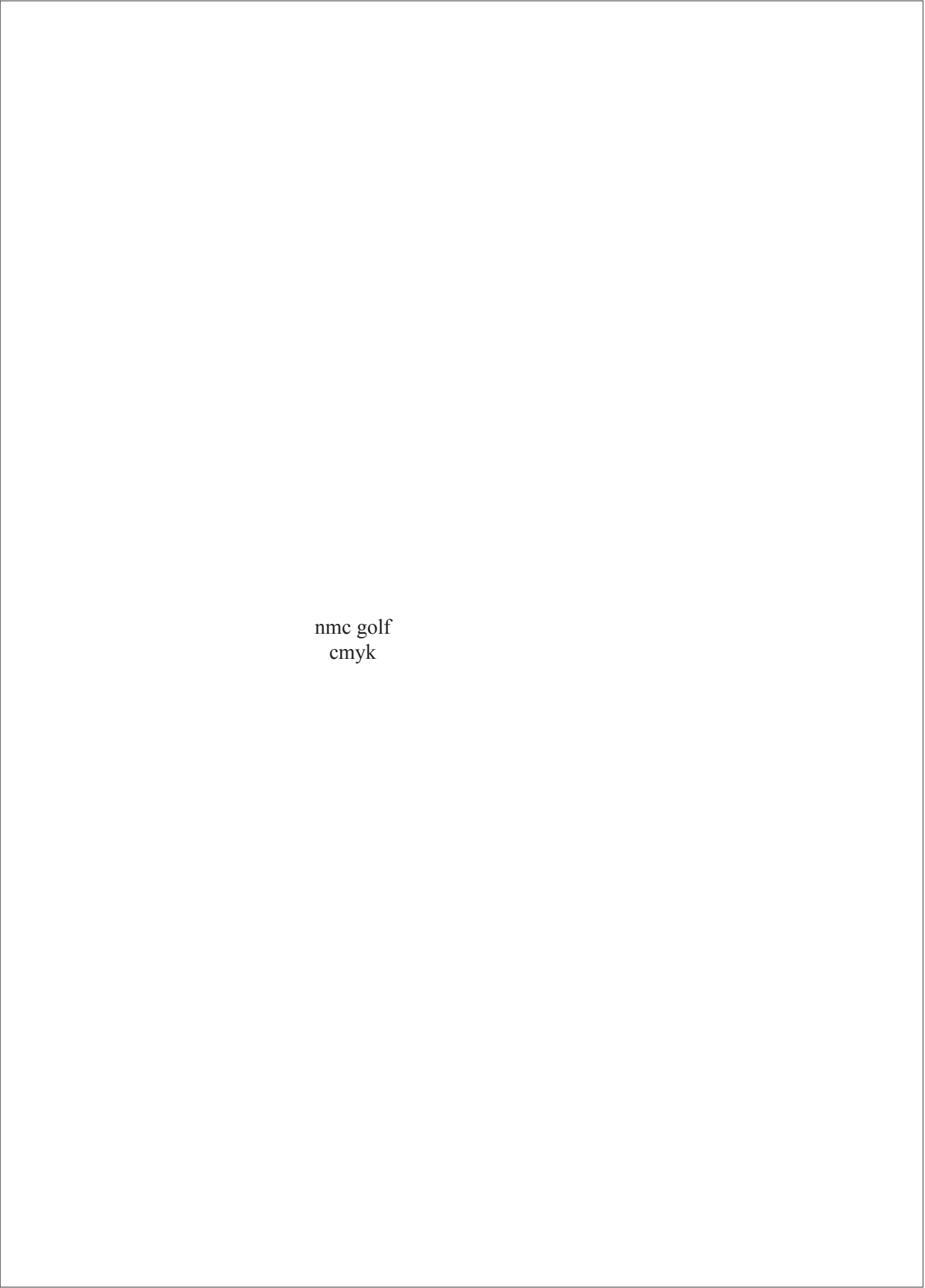
In a survey presented by Current Affairs students of NMC faculty Sam McPhetres yesterday, 40 of 76 students surveyed favored to "forget La Fiesta."

At the same time, 88 percent of the students said that NMC should just keep and renovate its existing campus in As Terlaje rather than continue with La Fiesta.

See NMC on Page 8



Local



RP bureau probes alleged extortion

By **EDITH G. ALEJANDRO**
REPORTER

The Philippine Bureau of Immigration chief has ordered a

Bennett gets ‘warning’ letter

By **LIBERTY DONES**
REPORTER

Public school teacher representative Ambrose Bennett said yesterday that he received a warning letter from the Board of Education over his use of the board’s letterhead in communicating with teachers.

“I’m disappointed; and I’m very sad because they are making a ‘me against them’ issue which should not be. Apparently, it’s not understood that it’s about my rights to communicate with teachers. That’s what it’s all about—communicating with teachers. I feel that they are trying to prevent teachers from being unified,” said Bennett.

He confirmed that he received a three-page letter signed by BOE chair Roman C. Benavente.

But Bennett said he feels the issuance of such letter may have originated from board member Herman T. Guerrero, whom he had had some conflict way back.

“I think it’s childish to make it—my communication with teachers using PSS stationery—as an issue against me,” he said.

He said he feels that some

full-blown investigation on the alleged extortion activities committed by some immigration officials against four Saipan residents last month.

board members are employing tactics to confuse teachers about him and his efforts to unite teachers especially now that he is “moving forward” with his initiatives.

For instance, he said that he has set a meeting with teachers on May 29, Saturday, at the Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe.

At the same time, he said he has received assurances from key figures who would help him and other teachers obtain recognition of their collective bargaining rights.

He said that Chief Justice Miguel Demapan has verbally assured him that he would be willing to provide some mediation or arbitration when issues arise between BOE/PSS and teachers.

At the same time, Bennett said he has asked the Legislature to allocate any unclaimed lottery money, now totaling over \$22,000, under the discretion of the BOE teacher representative strictly for the use of PSS teachers.

“I can see that they are trying to weaken my stand all of a sudden because teachers are getting ahead,” he said.

According to a report, Immigration Commissioner Alipio Fernandez Jr. said he had designated four lawyers from the Bureau of Immigration and the

As to the use of BOE stationery, Bennett insists that his name is on the same letterhead.

“My name is on the letterhead I’m using. And it’s clear that I’m only speaking on behalf of teachers, not on behalf of the board,” he said.

He said he hopes that board members would just help him address the issue on collective bargaining and other related issues rather than find ways to contain him.

Without disclosing its entire content, Bennett said that “a lot of this [warning] letter is totally wrong and I don’t want to embarrass the board.”

Sources said the letter warns of sanction against Bennett to the extent of recommending for his suspension or similar disciplinary action.

Sources said BOE is contemplating of asking the governor, who appoints the teacher representative, for appropriate action against Bennett.

Bennett said he is not intimidated at all because he knows that he is within the bounds of his duties. “It doesn’t change anything,” he said.

Department of Justice as members of the fact-finding committee that would conduct the extensive probe on the case.

Also, the BID chief assured that there would be no white-wash and appropriate punishment would be meted out against the responsible individuals if they are found guilty of the offense alleged by Eugenio Borja, David Cepeda, Jesus Lizama, and Brian Reyes.

Fernandez also requested the bureau’s Resident Ombudsman to assist in the probe by conducting a parallel investigation into the case, the report, published in the *Manila Bulletin*, said.

Named to the investigating panel were lawyers Benjamin Kalaw, the bureau’s legal chief; Jose Tria, a member of the bu-

reau’s prosecution task force; and Edmundo Magpantay, a DOJ prosecutor presently detailed with the bureau.

The committee, chaired by bureau administrative chief Felino Quirante Jr., was given 15 days to conduct its investigation and submit its findings and recommendations to Fernandez.

Fernandez directed the committee members to conduct a speedy and impartial investigation into reports that certain BI officials extorted huge sums of money from four Saipan nationals who were deported last month for violating the country’s immigration laws.

The deportees—all holders of U.S. passports—had been arrested for allegedly recruiting Filipina women to work as en-

tertainers on Saipan without the required license and work permits from the government.

Last month, CNMI Sen. Pete Reyes exposed the alleged extortion incident in a privilege speech on Tinian and warned CNMI residents against traveling to the Philippines because of “large-scale corruption” in the immigration bureau.

The senator identified immigration division attorney Eleuterio Balina, one Fe Valois-Banzuela and the warden and the assistant warden as recipients of more than P820,000 (\$16,400) from the four Saipan residents. The four allegedly spent P1.4 million (\$28,000) in all to be deported, including initial payments made for the dropping of the case.

Anatahan volcano acting up anew

Exactly a year after Anatahan woke up with a bang, the volcano on the island is becoming more energetic, with the crater throwing molten lava and mud hundreds of yards into the air.

In a joint report, the Emergency Management Office and the U.S. Geological Survey said yesterday that the magnitude of the eruption could even escalate unexpectedly.

Volcanic activity on the island has remained high since the “moderate eruption” began

last April 24. The EMO and the USGS said emissions of steam and ash continue to rise to a few thousand feet.

“Seismic activity since April 24 persists at a high level and consists of discrete explosion signals. Over the last few days, the explosions have become less frequent but more energetic, possibly throwing material some hundreds of yards [meters] out of the crater,” the joint reported stated.

“The eruption could become

more explosive at any time, with little or no warning,” it added.

The EMO reiterated that conditions on Anatahan could suddenly become dangerous to aircrafts.

“Although the volcano is not currently dangerous to most aircraft within the CNMI airspace, conditions may change rapidly, and aircraft should pass upwind of Anatahan or farther than 30 km downwind from the island and exercise due caution within 30-50 km of Anatahan,” the EMO said. **(John Ravelo)**

jollibee

cars unlimited

COMMUNITY

Briefs

OES PTSA meeting today

The acting principal of Oleai Elementary School is informing parents and guardians of its students that the PTSA meeting will be held today, May 11, at 6pm, in the school cafeteria.

Pageant postponed

The officers and organizers of the 2004 Queen of the World Gay Pageant sponsored by the Visayas-Mindanao Association (VIS-MINDA), which is scheduled on May 15, at Hotel Nikko Saipan would like to extend their sincerest apologies to the public as the said event is temporarily put on hold until further notice.

For those who have already purchased tickets, please hold on to that and do not worry because it would still be honored later on.

For more information, call Visminda president Nel Atalig 322-0691 or Ted Antiquena at 288-2677.

Residential, biz inspections in Kagman

The Division of Environmental Quality and the Bureau of Environmental Health would like to inform the residents of Kagman village that On-site Disposal System and premise compliance inspections would be conducted on residential and business facilities.

The inspections is ongoing since April 21 and will continue to be conducted every Tuesday and Wednesday.

These inspections are mandated by Public Law 12-48, which states that inspection must be conducted on commercial and private premises to prevent and control vector-borne diseases. Furthermore, the Governor's Directive, No. 220 discusses the identification and elimination of non-point source pollution, such as leakage from sewer systems and effluent disposals.

Kagman residents are asked to cooperate with inspectors by keeping their dog(s) on a leash for the safety of the inspectors. Both BEH and DEQ inspectors are required to wear their respective uniforms and photo identification during all inspections.

For additional information on the OSDS inspections, contact the BEH office at 664-4870/2 or the DEQ office at 664-8500/1.

Public library celebrates Family Literacy Month

In celebration of Family Literacy Month, the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library is informing the public that the Children's Librarian will be having an evening story hour on Thursdays for the month of May. The story hour will be held on May 13 and 20, from 6pm-7pm.

KagES Cultural Day set

The Kagman Elementary School will be holding its 3rd Annual Cultural Day on May 15 from 8am to 3pm.

The annual KagES Cultural Day celebrates the different cultures represented by the school community through song, dance, food and game booths, and various performances. It is hoped that, through this, its students will become socially responsible individuals who respect, and demonstrate knowledge of diverse cultures that fosters appreciation, tolerance and understanding of individual differences.

The public is welcome to participate.

Memorial Day meetings set

On May 31, 2004, Memorial Day, the CNMI will be paying tribute to fallen members of the U.S. Armed Forces.

The Office of the Military/Veterans Affairs would like to remind all concerned and interested that the Memorial Day Committee meetings will be held at its office on Capital Hill, Building #1364, every Wednesday at 10am. All are welcome.

WSR registration schedule

William S. Reyes Elementary School is announcing its registration schedule for school year 2004-2005. Registration procedures will be slightly different this school year.

June 14-25—Incoming students to register

If you need more information, call 664-3971/72.

OES Cultural Day on May 15

The Oleai Elementary School Cultural Day has been moved to Saturday, May 15, at the OES campus from 9am to 2pm. Tickets sold for April 24 will still be honored.

Proceeds of this activity will be used to support the school's ongoing improvement projects.

Oleai Elementary School staff, faculty and PTSA Officers would like to thank the following donors for their generosity: Pioneer, Lucky R Restaurant, Saipan Shipping Co., Saipan Stevedore Co., Duty Free, Tom's Water, John Ichihara, Roselle Ichihara, Microl Corp., Tina Tenorio, Tracy Del Rosario, Chino's Sterling Corp., Yodan Ent., McDonald's, Arnold Seman, Jesus Wabot, Marian Tudela, Megabyte, Hyatt Regency Hotel, Ming Ming Store, Cosmos Distributors, Frankie's Auto Shop, American Pacific Insurance Agency, and Mr. and Mrs. Rick Cabrera.

Outrigger racing series ongoing

The Marianas Interscholastic Sports Association Outrigger Racing Series will continue every Saturday until May 29. The event is open to the public and will be a great opportunity for everyone to share in the culture and competition.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF APRIL 10, 2004											
DEPARTURES						ARRIVALS					
Saipan-Morot						Morot-Saipan					
0600	0600	0700	0700	0700	0700	0600	0600	0700	0700	0700	0700
0630	0630	0730	0730	0730	0730	0630	0630	0730	0730	0730	0730
0700	0700	0800	0800	0800	0800	0700	0700	0800	0800	0800	0800
0730	0730	0830	0830	0830	0830	0730	0730	0830	0830	0830	0830
0800	0800	0900	0900	0900	0900	0800	0800	0900	0900	0900	0900
0830	0830	0930	0930	0930	0930	0830	0830	0930	0930	0930	0930
0900	0900	1000	1000	1000	1000	0900	0900	1000	1000	1000	1000
0930	0930	1030	1030	1030	1030	0930	0930	1030	1030	1030	1030
1000	1000	1100	1100	1100	1100	1000	1000	1100	1100	1100	1100
1030	1030	1130	1130	1130	1130	1030	1030	1130	1130	1130	1130
1100	1100	1200	1200	1200	1200	1100	1100	1200	1200	1200	1200
1130	1130	1230	1230	1230	1230	1130	1130	1230	1230	1230	1230
1200	1200	1300	1300	1300	1300	1200	1200	1300	1300	1300	1300
1230	1230	1330	1330	1330	1330	1230	1230	1330	1330	1330	1330
1300	1300	1400	1400	1400	1400	1300	1300	1400	1400	1400	1400
1330	1330	1430	1430	1430	1430	1330	1330	1430	1430	1430	1430
1400	1400	1500	1500	1500	1500	1400	1400	1500	1500	1500	1500
1430	1430	1530	1530	1530	1530	1430	1430	1530	1530	1530	1530
1500	1500	1600	1600	1600	1600	1500	1500	1600	1600	1600	1600
1530	1530	1630	1630	1630	1630	1530	1530	1630	1630	1630	1630
1600	1600	1700	1700	1700	1700	1600	1600	1700	1700	1700	1700
1630	1630	1730	1730	1730	1730	1630	1630	1730	1730	1730	1730
1700	1700	1800	1800	1800	1800	1700	1700	1800	1800	1800	1800
1730	1730	1830	1830	1830	1830	1730	1730	1830	1830	1830	1830
1800	1800	1900	1900	1900	1900	1800	1800	1900	1900	1900	1900
1830	1830	1930	1930	1930	1930	1830	1830	1930	1930	1930	1930
1900	1900	2000	2000	2000	2000	1900	1900	2000	2000	2000	2000
1930	1930	2030	2030	2030	2030	1930	1930	2030	2030	2030	2030
2000	2000	2100	2100	2100	2100	2000	2000	2100	2100	2100	2100
2030	2030	2130	2130	2130	2130	2030	2030	2130	2130	2130	2130
2100	2100	2200	2200	2200	2200	2100	2100	2200	2200	2200	2200
2130	2130	2230	2230	2230	2230	2130	2130	2230	2230	2230	2230
2200	2200	2300	2300	2300	2300	2200	2200	2300	2300	2300	2300
2230	2230	2330	2330	2330	2330	2230	2230	2330	2330	2330	2330
2300	2300	2400	2400	2400	2400	2300	2300	2400	2400	2400	2400
2330	2330	2430	2430	2430	2430	2330	2330	2430	2430	2430	2430
2400	2400	2500	2500	2500	2500	2400	2400	2500	2500	2500	2500
2430	2430	2530	2530	2530	2530	2430	2430	2530	2530	2530	2530
2500	2500	2600	2600	2600	2600	2500	2500	2600	2600	2600	2600
2530	2530	2630	2630	2630	2630	2530	2530	2630	2630	2630	2630
2600	2600	2700	2700	2700	2700	2600	2600	2700	2700	2700	2700
2630	2630	2730	2730	2730	2730	2630	2630	2730	2730	2730	2730
2700	2700	2800	2800	2800	2800	2700	2700	2800	2800	2800	2800
2730	2730	2830	2830	2830	2830	2730	2730	2830	2830	2830	2830
2800	2800	2900	2900	2900	2900	2800	2800	2900	2900	2900	2900
2830	2830	2930	2930	2930	2930	2830	2830	2930	2930	2930	2930
2900	2900	3000	3000	3000	3000	2900	2900	3000	3000	3000	3000
2930	2930	3030	3030	3030	3030	2930	2930	3030	3030	3030	3030
3000	3000	3100	3100			3000	3000	3100	3100		

0600

0600

0700

0700

0700

0700

0600

0600

0700

0700

0700

0700

0630

0630

0730

0730

0730

0730

0630

0630

0730

0730

0730

0730

0700

0700

0800

0800

0800

0800

0700

0700

0800

0800

0800

0800

0730

0730

0830

0830

0830

0830

0730

0730

0830

0830

0830

0830

0800

0800

0900

0900

0900

0900

0800

0800

0900

0900

0900

0900

0830

0830

0930

0930

0930

0930

0830

0830

0930

0930

0930

0930

0900

0900

1000

1000

1000

1000

0900

0900

1000

1000

1000

1000

0930

0930

1030

1030

1030

1030

0930

0930

1030

1030

1030

1030

1000

1000

1100

1100

1100

1100

1000

1000

1100

1100

1100

1100

1030

1030

1130

1130

1130

1130

1030

1030

1130

1130

1130

1130

1100

1100

1200

1200

1200

1200

1100

1100

1200

1200

1200

1200

1130

1130

1230

1230

1230

1230

1130

1130

1230

1230

1230

1230

1200

1200

1300

1300

1300

1300

1200

1200

1300

1300

1300

1300

1230

1230

1330

1330

1330

1330

1230

1230

1330

1330

1330

1330

1300

1300

1400

1400

1400

1400

1300

1300

1400

1400

1400

1400

1330

1330

1430

1430

1430

1430

1330

1330

1430

1430

1430

1430

1400

1400

1500

1500

1500

1500

1400

1400

1500

1500

1500

1500

1430

1430

1530

1530

1530

1530

1430

1430

1530

1530

1530

1530

1500

1500

1600

1600

1600

1600

1500

1500

1600

1600

1600

1600

1530

1530

1630

1630

1630

1630

1530

1530

1630

1630

1630

1630

1600

1600

1700

1700

1700

1700

1600

1600

1700

1700

1700

1700

1630

1630

1730

1730

1730

1730

1630

1630

1730

1730

1730

1730

1700

1700

1800

1800

1800

1800

1700

1700

1800

1800

1800

1800

1730

1730

1830

1830

1830

1830

1730

1730

1830

1830

1830

1830

1800

1800

1900

1900

1900

1900

1800

1800

1900

1900

1900

1900

1830

1830

1930

1930

1930

1930

1830

1830

1930

1930

1930

1930

1900

1900

2000

2000

2000

2000

1900

1900

2000

2000

2000

2000

1930

1930

2030

2030

2030

2030

1930

1930

2030

2030

2030

2030

2000

2000

2100

2100

2100

2100

2000

2000

2100

2100

2100

2100

2030

2030

2130

2130

2130

2130

2030

2030

2130

2130

2130

2130

2100

2100

2200

2200

2200

2200

2100

2100

2200

2200

2200

2200

2130

2130

2230

2230

2230

2230

2130

2130

2230

2230

2230

2230

2200

2200

2300

2300

2300

2300

2200

2200

2300

2300

2300

2300

2230

2230

2330

2330

2330

2330

2230

2230

2330

2330

2330

2330

2300

2300

2400

2400

2400

2400

2300

2300

2400

2400

2400

2400

2330

2330

2430

2430

2430

2430

2330

2330

2430

2430

2430

2430

2400

2400

2500

2500

2500

2500

2400

2400

2500

2500

2500

2500

2430

2430

2530

2530

2530

2530

2430

2430

2530

2530

2530

2530

2500

2500

2600

2600

2600

2600

2500

2500

2600

2600

2600

2600

2530

2530

2630

2630

2630

2630

2530

2530

2630

2630

2630

2630

2600

2600

2700

2700

2700

2700

2600

2600

2700

2700

2700

2700

2630

2630

2730

2730

2730

2730

2630

2630

2730

2730

2730

2730

2700

2700

2800

2800

2800

2800

2700

2700

2800

2800

2800

2800

2730

2730

2830

2830

2830

2830

2730

2730

2830

2830

2830

2830

2800

2800

2900

2900

2900

2900

2800

2800

2900

2900

2900

2900

2830

2830

2930

2930

2930

2930

2830

2830

2930

2930

2930

2930

2900

2900

3000

3000

3000

3000

2900

2900

3000

3000

3000

3000

2930

2930

3030

3030

3030

3030

2930

2930

3030

3030

3030

3030

3000

3000

3100

3100

3000

3000

3100

3100

0600

0600

0700

0700

0700

0700

0600

0600

0700

0700

0700

0700

0630

0630

0730

0730

0730

0730

0630

0630

0730

0730

0730

0730

0700

0700

0800

0800

0800

0800

0700

0700

0800

0800

0800

0800

0730

0730

0830

0830

0830

0830

0730

0730

0830

0830

0830

0830

0800

0800

0900

0900

0900

0900

0800

0800

0900

0900

0900

0900

0830

0830

0930

0930

0930

0930

0830

0830

0930

0930

0930

0930

0900

0900

1000

1000

1000

1000

0900

0900

1000

1000

1000

1000

0930

0930

1030

1030

1030

1030

0930

0930

1030

1030

1030

1030

1000

1000

1100

1100

1100

1100

1000

1000

1100

1100

1100

1100

1030

1030

1130

1130

1130

1130

1030

1030

1130

1130

1130

1130

1100

1100

1200

1200

1200

1200

1100

1100

1200

1200

1200

1200

1130

1130

1230

1230

1230

1230

1130

1130

1230

1230

1230

1230

1200

‘Prioritize govt in meter installation’

By **LIBERTY DONES**
REPORTER

The central government has asked the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. to prioritize government buildings in the installation of smart water meters in the wake of overcharging allegations.

“Government buildings will receive priority [in meter installation],” said Finance Secretary Fermin Atalig in a May 5 letter to CUC executive director Lorraine A. Babauta.

The CUC and the CNMI Water Task Force are set to install 4,000 new smart water meters this year in anticipation of having a 24-hour water supply on the island by next year.

Atalig said that CUC should ensure that utility billings to all customers be based on metered

consumption and rational fare rate structure.

Atalig had pointed out that, despite “massive subsidies” from the central government, “CUC has not achieved the desired results in the establishment of basic utility services to all citizens.”

Instead, the CUC has allegedly overcharged the government by over \$33 million for water use in the last 10 years and \$9.1 million in power use despite the implementation of rate adjustment in 1997.

Atalig said water reading by CUC is questionable since most of the government agencies do not receive 24-hour water service.

Further, the Finance Department, which shoulders all the utility bills for government offices, said that CUC subsidies in excess of fair and rational

utility consumption will be set annually based on criteria determined by the Office of the Governor.

“[CUC] must comply with restrictions established for expenditure of these subsidies,” said Atalig. The government said that it has provided CUC some \$200 million in subsidies.

“The existing subsidies have not been effective in accomplishing this objective [provision of basic utility services to all residents] and this fact is obvious if one simply examines the existing level of water/electrical service,” said Atalig.

The government said the current level of CUC service is unacceptable and poses a direct threat to the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of the CNMI and major changes need to be implemented.

Fejeran sues CUC, OPA over the rejection of its sewer project bid

By **JOHN RAVELO**
REPORTER

Local businessman Benigno T. Fejeran, the owner of construction firm Solid Builders, has filed a lawsuit against the Office of the Public Auditor and the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. over the agencies’ decision against his company’s bid on a sewer system project.

Fejeran’s lawyer, Perry B. Inos, asked the Superior Court to award Solid Builders the government contract over the As Matuis Subdivision Sewer System. Inos also asked the court to order any decision on awarding the contract be deferred before the court case is resolved.

The CUC reportedly solicited bids for the project in September 2002. Inos said Solid Builders timely submitted its bid in the amount of \$1,258,139.63—the lowest of nine bid submissions. The CUC later notified Solid Builders that it would review the company’s responsibility pursuant to procurement regulations.

“Included among those areas related to bidder qualification were the status of the bid, performance and payment bonds. Specifically, the BRC [Bid Review Committee] wanted to know whether the bonds had been issued by a U.S. Treasury-listed surety,” Inos said.

The CUC also represented that it has discretion to consider alternative security and to waive any bid requirement, Inos added.

When Solid Builders submitted its bid, it also turned in its bid bond issued by Equitable Insurance in the amount of \$240,000. The Attorney General’s Office, however, later ruled that the bid bond with Equitable, a domestic insurance firm, was not an acceptable security.

In February 2003, however, the BRC asked Solid Builders to provide a written statement indicating its ability to acquire the needed U.S. Treasury-listed performance and payment bonds, Inos said. The lawyer said Solid Builders provided CUC assurances from Pacific

Indemnity Insurance Co., a Treasury-listed surety firm, that it would issue the needed bonds once the government decides to award the project contract to the construction firm.

CUC rejected Solid Builders’ bid in September 2003 based on the AGO’s recommendation. The company protested the decision before the CUC, which rejected the bid with finality.

“For the first time, CUC pointed to Solid Builders’ purportedly ‘weak financial position’ as the reason for rejecting its bid; Solid Builders’ allegedly overdrawn accounts; and to accounts receivable that, according to the executive director, were ‘excessively delinquent,’” said Inos.

CUC also said Solid Builders lacked financial resources to ensure timely completion of the utility company’s projects.

Solid Builders appealed the bid rejection before the OPA, which affirmed CUC’s decision. Inos alleged the bid rejection by both CUC and the OPA manifested abuse of discretion.

NMC students not informed of their rights

Many Northern Marianas College students said the NMC administration failed to advise them of their rights upon entry to the college.

In a survey conducted by NMC faculty Sam McPhetres’ Current Affairs class, 69 students said they were not advised of their student rights; only 11 said they received such advise.

Also, 62 students said they did not obtain a student rights’ handbook upon registering at NMC; 18 said they have it. Further, 28 said that at the orientation for new students, facilitators did not explain student rights; only 10 said contrary to this.

For those who missed the student orientation, 18 said they only learned about student rights from fellow students, nine of

them learned it from a catalog, three from NMC personnel, two from the Internet, and 10 said they never learned about it.

When asked in the survey, students want added in the student rights’ list the right to be excused from classes for military duty, to choose whether or not to attend class without grounds for failure, and to question instructors’ accountability without grounds for failure.

Meantime, on NMC’s role in the community, NMC instructors said that the college should provide more programs and workshops for free.

Instructors also said that NMC should raise the educational bar “and keep raising it.”

“The more instructors expect of students, the more those stu-

dents will do. We need to recognize academics,” they said.

Instructors further said NMC should “get the Pacific Gateway going and continue offering classes.”

Survey feedback from the business and hotel industry said NMC should offer affordable and economical rates per unit.

Meantime, high school principal and vice principal respondents said NMC should be an “educational institution, not a business.”

“NMC is concerned more about quotas, not the curriculum,” they said.

The students’ survey covered NMC’s role in the community, student rights, the Gateway project, and hiring practices.

(Liberty Dones)

PEPSI

CDA

Opinion

Saipan Tribune

CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
Volume XIV, Issue No. 132

Published daily at 2/F Century Insurance Building,
Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI
Mailing Address: PMB 34, Box 10001, Saipan, MP, 96950

John Pangelinan PUBLISHER
Jayvee L. Vallejera EDITOR

MEMBER

AP The Associated Press

Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Discounting drugs

Since Monday, seniors without other prescription drug coverage have been able to purchase Medicare drug discount cards. According to government estimates, the cards could save seniors as much as 25 percent of their prescription drug costs. According to a Harvard study, the cards will save seniors, on average, 17.4 percent of their drug costs. According to House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., "some seniors will be able to save on their medications when they use the cards. But many will not."

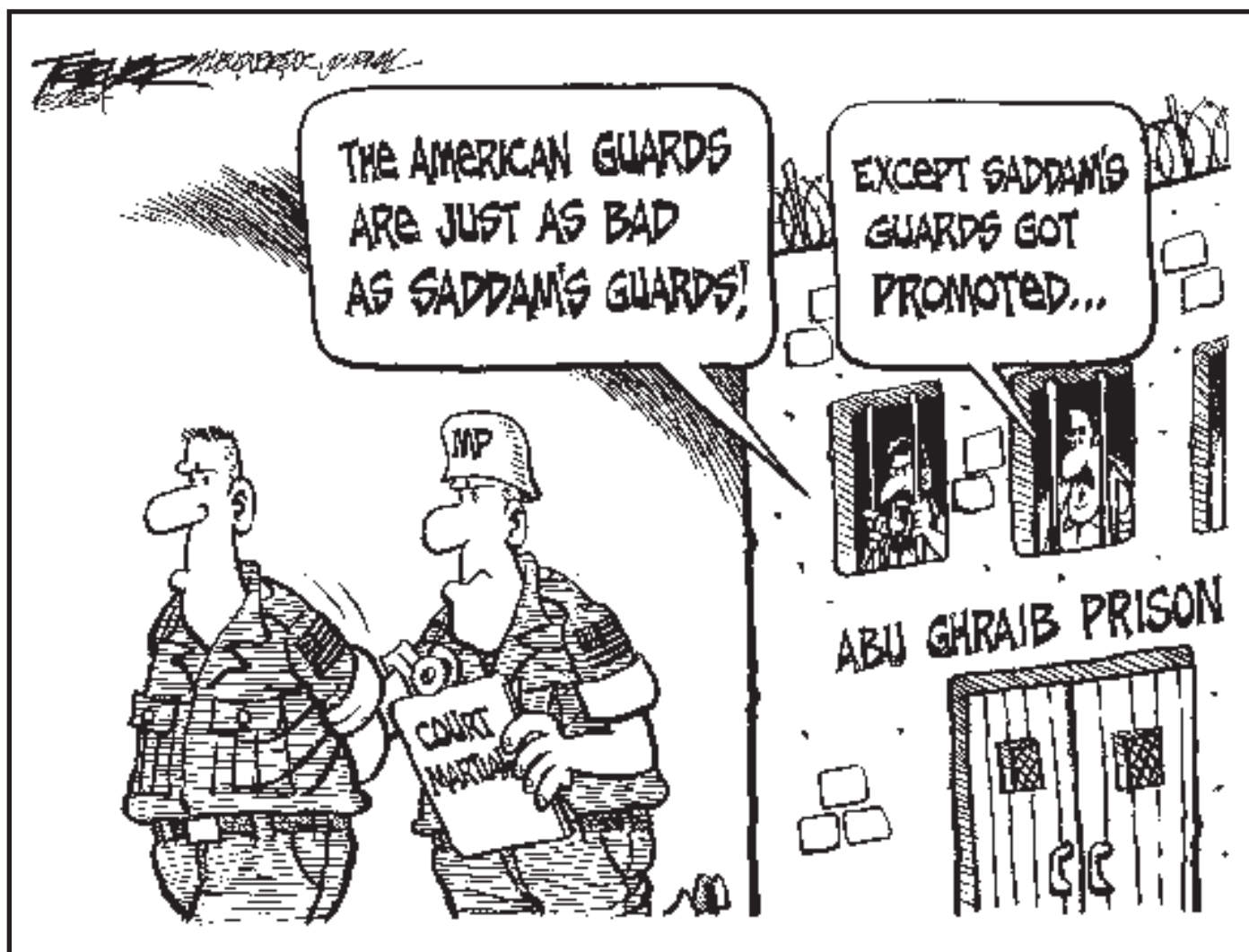
There is a reason these estimates vary: The cards are not being issued by the government but rather by more than 70 companies, including pharmacies, pharmacy benefit managers and insurance companies. The issuers are negotiating and setting the prices, and, by doing so, they are creating a market that does not yet exist—largely due to a lack of information—and whose behavior cannot be predicted. Once the program is fully up and running, it will, theoretically, be possible for seniors to shop around and compare the prices offered by various discount cards, not only to one another, but to Internet prescription drug companies, which seem to be offering prices lower than most of the discount cards. Tommy Thompson, secretary of health and human services, predicts that the higher quality of information will force prices down as companies compete with one another for seniors' business.

But nobody knows how or whether a market will work for drugs. The sheer quantity of information may drown seniors unused to choosing from dozens of plans. Medicare has set up a hotline, 1-800-Medicare, and a Web site to help seniors pick plans, but how well will an aging and disabled population be able to use them? Once seniors have chosen a plan, they have to stick with it—even if the prices change—at least until November. Will the companies selling the drug cards really compete to push prices down permanently, as Thompson predicts?

The answers to these questions matter, not so much because of the 25 percent or 17.4 percent that seniors might or might not save on their drugs over the next year and a half, but because many of these issues will arise again, on Jan. 1, 2006, when the prescription drug benefit itself finally kicks in. At that time, seniors will be asked to choose not just discount cards, but entire drug plans, also on a competitive basis, also weighing vast amounts of information. If Thompson is wrong, and the discount card program produces confusion, or fraud, or rising prices, then Congress and the country should seriously consider whether to go through with the drug benefit plan at all.

Politicians and seniors alike should monitor this smaller program to see whether it is really possible to inject competition into the strange prescription drug market. If it isn't, they should be prepared to say so.

(c) 2004, The Washington Post



Prison abuse is not really 'un-American'

By ROBERT L. BASTIAN JR.

Special to the Los Angeles Times

"That's not the way we do things in America," he added.

In terms of aspirations, Bush is certainly correct: Americans generally do not regard themselves as arrogant, abusive, violent, mean, petty and ignoble. As a matter of empirical, verifiable fact, however, the best social-scientific evidence suggests that the president is simply wrong on both counts.

In 1971, for example, Stanford psychology professor Philip G. Zimbardo initiated an experiment in which participating Stanford students were designated either as prisoners or guards, with guards told to maintain order. After only a few days, the project had to be terminated prematurely because the guards were, with no apparent motivation other than fulfilling their roles, becoming uncomfortably abusive toward the prisoners. What does that say about our "nature"?

In another famous experiment, Yale psychology professor Stanley Milgram told subjects to give electric shocks to a victim in a learning experiment. As the victim—an actor in another room who was not actually being shocked—gave incorrect answers, the participants were asked to turn the voltage up, even to where the dial read "danger," a point at which the victim could be heard screaming. Although often reluctant, two-thirds of the subjects continued to follow orders to administer shocks.

Given that, what's so surprising about the fact that in 2004, reservists controlling the relevant tier in Abu Ghraib prison would—in an effort to follow orders—agree to "soften" the Iraqi detainees for questioning?

If the president was wrong about the nature of the American people, he was no less wrong about the way things are done by Americans.

At the outset of the occupation, it was earnestly argued that the Iraqi people would welcome and benefit from imposition of U.S.-style democracy and freedoms. The American public—and, I suspect, most of the world—believed that Americans could do a better job of running a prison such as Abu Ghraib. We're not arbitrary, abusive, unaccountable or unjust, right? Indeed, last June, Brig. Gen. Janis Karpinski told a reporter that Americans were making living conditions so much better at Abu Ghraib that she was concerned prisoners "wouldn't want to leave."

But again, we are deluding ourselves. The hard fact is that the United States did install in Iraq an American-style approach to prison management. Like the U.S. prison system, it is underfunded and inadequately supervised, lacks civilian oversight and accountability and is secretive and tolerant of inmate abuse until evidence of mistreatment is pushed into the public light. That, regrettably, is the American model.

Over the past four decades, political leaders here at home have committed themselves to incarcerating inmates at rates that ultimately rivaled the former Soviet Union and repressive Middle Eastern regimes. Prisons have grown overcrowded and understaffed.

At the same time, there has been no commensurate commitment to protecting prisoner rights or upholding even minimal standards. Both state and federal legislatures, with the complicity of federal courts, have continually trimmed avenues of legal redress for inmates subject to abuse.

For its part, the public was fed the myth that prisoners were coddled, and citizens accepted on faith that inmates were treated fairly. The public faith was interrupted only when graphic images materialized as evidence or by guards "rolling over."

Regarding Abu Ghraib, testimonial evidence of abuse was reported by no fewer than a half-dozen organizations, including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. Until photos were shown on "60 Minutes II," though, they were merely allegations and, therefore, not the subject of public concern and remedial action.

So, what has been shown in Abu Ghraib that has not already been seen in the United States? Recently, images of cages in which California Youth Authority wards were locked up for as much as 23 hours a day were broadcast. In 2001, Human Rights Watch reported in detail how extensively rape is tolerated in U.S. prisons.

The Eddie Dillard case, in which I represented the inmate, revealed a paper trail with respect to one prolific cell rapist responsible for more than 30 reported incidents of attempted or completed sexual assaults at six different California prisons. Still, the predator was assigned more cellmates.

The accumulated result: A federal district court judge in Northern California has threatened to take over the California Department of Corrections because it can't break the code of silence among its guards and take responsibility for the integrity of its mission.

In the past decade, the department has restricted visits by family and journalists to the remote locations where prisons have been scattered, on the ground that the media might glamorize prison life. Or has it acted to impede reporting of underfunding and abuse?

In the shadow of the infamous Abu Ghraib photographs, it's easy to understand why much of the world looks upon Americans as craven and arrogant. In so many ways, the United States' interests and international image have been harmed as we act on our aspirations and self-congratulatory beliefs instead of a cold, hard view of reality, including our own limitations.

No less a figure than Winston Churchill famously said that "treatment of crime and criminals is one of the most unfailing tests of civilization of any country." If Churchill was right, so, at the moment, are America's critics.

Bastian is a Los Angeles lawyer.

The low-interest-rate party isn't over yet

By EVERETT EHRLICH
SPECIAL TO THE LOS ANGELES TIMES

So are they right? Are we really about to see a dramatic reversal of interest rates? In fact, no. No party lasts forever, and rates can't stay as low as they are indefinitely, but there is no reason to believe rates will rise as fast as the current panic suggests.

Money today is stunningly, compellingly cheap. As recently as a year ago, financial markets were gripped by a wave of concern regarding deflation. The theory was that falling oil prices, a soft economy and the presence of a billion Chinese ready to work for beans guaranteed ever-declining prices.

To avoid this catastrophic outcome—who would ever buy anything today if everything was going to be cheaper tomorrow?—the Fed lowered interest rates to levels never seen by most of us, leading to today's meager 1 percent.

But the expectations of a slow, deflationary economy ceased overnight—and it was a specific night, April 2, 2004. Because the next morning, the Bureau of Labor Statistics announced that the economy had created 308,000 new jobs in March. (Leave aside a few issues, such as 25 percent of the increase coming from the quirky construction sector and the fact that total hours worked in the economy actually went down, hardly a sign of a bottle-rocket labor market.) News of this sudden burst of employment, combined with some recent higher-than-expected inflation numbers and good reports about retail sales and factory orders, sent the financial markets into a tizzy. The economy was about to surge, inflation was back and the Fed was about to pull back the throttle and run the interest rate machine in reverse.

The vehemence of the markets' sudden apostasy, like that of any other penitent, reflects to some extent the absurdity of earlier beliefs. Lulled to sleep by the deflationists and the slow-growth crowd, the markets had somehow chosen not to see that interest rates could not stay at 1 percent forever. At some point, rates will have to rise substantially from their current levels; to think otherwise is to believe the economy will never again grow. Markets consigned this inevitability to the distant future, but as they say in football, the future is now.

So the question is, when will the Fed begin its long march back to interest rate normalcy? Certainly, with rates as low as they are, they have a long way to go. But that doesn't mean they need to start soon.

The March employment report aside, total employment in the economy has grown by only about two-thirds of 1 percent—by 780,000 jobs out of a labor force of 120 million.

A good comparison point is what happened in the 1990s when total employment had grown by only two-thirds of 1 percent, and interest rates, like today's, offered no premium over inflation.

It wasn't until total employment grew by a full 4 percent in the recovery later in the '90s before the Fed felt obliged to put interest rates on their inevitable journey to normal levels. Using that calculation, the economy could produce monthly job gains of 300,000 for months if not a year before the Fed would take action.

But the odds of that happening are slim. Even though the economy is growing, employment will have to work hard to catch up. The disconnect between the two is productivity—our ability to produce larger amounts of stuff with the same number of people. Productivity always grows dramatically in the first few quarters of a recovery, as the economy bounces back from its doldrums and factories and offices go back to work. But after about six quarters of recovery, this "bounce-back" typically peters out. We are now a year past that point and yet productivity continues to roar ahead. To be sure, the Fed has many balls to juggle when determining rates. Inflation may have risen in recent months, but with employment low, productivity high and imports abundant, it's hard to imagine the prices of goods and services rising.

The fly in the ointment might be timing. If the Fed doesn't raise rates at its next opportunity this June, it will have to act later this year, in the shadow of the presidential election. It seems unlikely that Greenspan, who played off the Bush administration's sheet music during the tax-cut debate, would want to plunk a discordant note during the campaign. So a pre-emptive hike in June can't be dismissed. But so long as productivity continues to race ahead, the Fed can bide its time. The party may be winding down, but it's not yet over.

Ehrlich, an undersecretary of Commerce in the Clinton administration, is director of research of the Committee for Economic Development, a nonpartisan economic-policy think tank.

Heading off the next war

By DAVID M. LAMPTON and KENNETH LIEBERTHAL
Special to The Washington

The recent unsettled election in Taiwan highlights a disturbing fact: The framework that has buttressed peace in the Taiwan Strait for decades is disintegrating. Changes in Taiwan, as well as some of Beijing's counterproductive behavior, are undermining its foundations. Unless an improved framework is adopted soon, war across the strait will become increasingly probable, with the United States likely to be drawn into it. No matter who should "win" such a conflict, the consequences for China, Taiwan, America and Northeast Asia would be dire.

The conundrum is stark. Taiwan sees itself as an "independent, sovereign country." China, with a national fixation over a century long on achieving territorial unity, has staked the legitimacy of its regime on not allowing Taiwan juridical stature as a sovereign country. And the United States has for more than three decades been committed to a "one China" policy, combined with a threat to become militarily involved if Beijing uses force to effect a resolution of cross-strait issues.

There has been rapid expansion in "Taiwan consciousness" on the island in recent years, strongly promoted by the current government in Taipei. And Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian is pledging to hold a referendum in 2006 to authorize a new constitution, and then to adopt the new document in May 2008—acts that some in Beijing say could mean war. Moreover, Chen apparently believes that China's threat to use force is a bluff and that the U.S. commitment to back Taiwan militarily is unrestricted—the logic being that a democratic America and a supportive U.S. Congress would back Taipei no matter what sparked a conflict.

Chen and his predecessor Lee Teng-hui have been so sure of U.S. support that defense spending on the island has continually declined over the past 12 years. But Chen's two assumptions are flawed, and they could well lead him to take actions that precipitate war.

Each side at this point is pursuing efforts to change facts on the ground in its own favor. China is deploying additional missiles that can strike Taiwan and seeking ways to inflict losses on American forces should they intervene on Taiwan's behalf. Taiwan is deepening its effort to instill a distinctive Taiwanese identity, strengthen its bona fides as an independent country and acquire offensive-weapon capabilities. And Washington is both expanding and deepening its military ties with Taiwan, while telling Chen that America does not favor any efforts on his part to challenge the status quo, despite having earlier said that America would "do whatever it takes to help Taiwan defend herself."

Vice President Dick Cheney is to visit Beijing this week, and it appears he will follow the traditional American path of recommending cross-strait dialogue and warning of severe consequences should military conflict flare. He will also assure Beijing that Washington opposes unilateral independence for Taiwan. While voicing these essential elements of a prudent message, the vice president

Kerry? What were we thinking?

By JIM SHEA
The Hartford Courant

We may have made a horrible mistake. We may have backed the wrong guy. Granted, it was difficult to stick with Howard after it became apparent he wasn't wrapped all that tight, but perhaps we were a bit hasty in jumping on the Kerry bandwagon.

So far, the Kerry campaign has all the forward momentum of a Dukakis tank ride.

Since sewing up the nomination, the two most memorable things John Kerry has done are go on vacation and have surgery.

Over the weekend, he went for a bike ride in Boston—and fell off. You tie that mishap together with the shoulder injury he sustained—riding on a bus—and Kerry's just a staircase header away from wrenching the Slapstick in Chief title away from Gerald Ford.

Besides the walking-and-chewing-gum problem, Kerry is also turning out to be quite the gasbag. He's one of those people who if you say nice night to him, he wants to explain the cosmos.

I mean, two minutes of listening to Kerry these days and you're longing for the excitement of a Joe Lieberman foreign-policy speech.

The thing is, we Democrats didn't endorse Kerry because of his intellect; we got behind him because we thought he would go nose-to-nose with President Bush.

Now we're not so sure. Since securing the nomination, Kerry has been whacked around more than Larry, Curly and Moe put together.

also should signal both Beijing and Taipei that America is prepared for new thinking in the search for peace and growth in the region.

The reality is that there is no final resolution to cross-strait issues that the two sides are likely to be able to reach peacefully for decades. The major effort, therefore, should shift to establishing a stable framework across the strait for a long period—counted not in years but in decades. For such a framework to be effective, all sides must agree on its fundamentals and its minimum duration, and they must seek the support of the international community in reinforcing it.

Any stable framework will have to effectively address the core fears of each player. We believe that the necessary conditions for the new framework must include the following:

- Taiwan can continue to assert during the decades-long period covered by the agreement that it is an "independent, sovereign country," but it must abjure additional steps to turn this island-wide sensibility into a juridical fact. Beijing can continue to assert that there is only one China and that Taiwan is a part of it, but it must give up its threat to use military force to change Taiwan's status. On this basis, Beijing and Taipei would agree on terms for expanded international space for Taiwan, including the island's involvement in global and regional international organizations.

- Beijing and Taipei must agree to engage in confidence-building measures across the strait to reduce concerns about potential conflict, and the United States and others must commit to play appropriate supporting roles. If tensions across the strait diminish, so should—under long-standing U.S. policy—military sales to Taiwan.

- Beijing and Taipei must agree to use the decades of the new framework to progressively expand ties across the strait, including political visits of various sorts, to allow people on both sides to develop a better understanding of each other.

- At the least, the United States, Japan and the European Union must guarantee that they will not recognize an independent Taiwan during the framework period and that all would regard Beijing's unprovoked use of force against Taiwan as a matter of the gravest immediate concern.

Even this modest framework will be very difficult to establish. Each of these principles will have to be fleshed out operationally and the resulting agreement approved in at least China, Taiwan and America. And there is disagreement about cross-strait policy in Beijing, Taipei and Washington.

The proposed new framework therefore requires courageous initiatives from all three political leaderships and considerable diplomatic skill to put into place. But the foreseeable alternatives are too destructive for responsible leaders to avoid taking a serious look—and soon—at ways to get things off a very dangerous track.

David M. Lampton is Hyman professor and director of China studies at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and the Nixon Center. Kenneth Lieberthal is a professor of political science at the University of Michigan; he was senior director for Asia on the National Security Council from 1998 to 2000.

What happened to the "I'm a fighter" thing? What happened to "bring it on?"

It's so bad that Kerry has even let the Republicans get away with criticizing his war record.

It was left to House minority leader Nancy Pelosi to point out that while Kerry was getting three purple hearts, Bush was getting a dental exam.

It was left to Sen. Frank Lautenberg to deep-fry Vice President Dick Cheney and the chicken hawks, saying: "They talk tough ... but when it was their turn to serve, they were AWOL from courage."

What Kerry is failing to recognize is that everybody is already Tongue Fu fighting and their ads are fast as lightning. And if he doesn't "bring it on" now, it's going to be hasta la vista, baby.

There are certainly ample targets of opportunity: Iraq, jobs, taxes, prescription drugs, the possibility Bush may be married to his national security adviser!

The bottom line, fellow Democrats, is this. If Kerry doesn't show some spunk soon, we should start thinking about nominating someone at the convention who will.

Dean—with the right medication—remains a viable option.

Sincerely,
Howard Beale
(Still mad as hell.)

Shea is a columnist for The Courant.

Saipan Tribune
CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

annual rate of \$182. Off-island subscription rate is \$376 per year. For additional subscription information, call 235-8747 or 235-2769, or fax 235-3740. For inquiries contact 235-2769. E-mail: sales.tribune@vzpacifica.net

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor.tribune@vzpacifica.net. Website: www.saipantribune.com **CUSTOMER SERVICE** For inquiries, purchase of back issues and complaints, call (670) 235-8747, 235-2440, fax 235-3740. **SUBSCRIPTION** Published Monday to Sunday, Saipan Tribune offers door-to-door on-island delivery at an annual rate of \$182. Off-island subscription rate is \$376 per year. For additional subscription information, call 235-8747 or 235-2769, or fax 235-3740. **ADVERTISING**



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

LANCHEROS

Gov. Juan N. Babauta signed a proclamation declaring the month of May 2004 as "Mes Lancheros" or "Farmers' Month." Among those who attended the ceremony were DLNR Secretary Richard Seman (2nd from left), Sabalu Market President Bill Ada (4th from left), Division of Agriculture Acting Director Ben Borja (5th from left), VP Saipan Agricultural Fair Association Mac Chargualaf (3rd from right), and President of SAFA Dr. Ignacio Dela Cruz (2nd from right). Other farmers and DLNR staff are also pictured.

LABOR

From Page 1

forms," said the ombudsman.

Benedetto stressed that House Bill 14-142 would also cost millions of dollars on the employers' side due to increased transactional costs and costly litigation costs for the Commonwealth government.

Benedetto made the comments in yesterday's public hearing on H.B. 14-142 held by the House Committee on Commerce at the lower chamber.

In his written comment to House Rep. Ray Yumul, the ombudsman suggested the creation of a Blue Ribbon Commission that would conduct thorough review of the system and to come up with a set of recommendations for comprehensive reforms.

"In my opinion, the committee should consider adopting a more comprehensive package of amendments, based on the recommendations of a Blue Ribbon Commission, that would discuss the current problems with the Act, the policies to be advanced, and the best means for advancing these policies," said Benedetto.

The ombudsman said the bill does not address many of the Nonresi-

dent Workers Act's problems, particularly the Department of Labor's inability to quickly investigate a labor complaint.

Although some workers are taking advantage of the Temporary Work Authorization issued them, Benedetto said it is unfair to formulate a policy affecting an entire industry when a group of workers benefiting from this scheme is a small minority.

"I believe it is a mistake to formulate policy affecting an entire industry of major importance to the economy of the CNMI, based on a few who exploit the loopholes in the system," he added.

Based on U.S. Labor records, majority of workers' complaints are for serious violations such as non-payment of wages, non-payment of overtime compensation, illegal deductions and charges, wrongful termination, breach of contract, or serious violations of workers' rights under the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Also, the U.S. Labor Office stressed that the measure would hurt businesses in the Commonwealth since elimination of consensual and expiration transfers, and requiring workers who are renewed

to depart the CNMI, will cost businesses millions of dollars each year.

"Large employers will find that the transactional costs—repatriating workers whose contracts expire, the down time and lost productivity associated with that worker's position being vacant until a new worker can be recruited, recruiting the new worker, bringing him to the CNMI and submitting a new application and all supporting documents to the Labor Department—will amount to several thousand dollars for each worker," said the ombudsman.

Citing the Tan Holdings Corp. with its over 3,000 employees, Benedetto said the elimination of transfer and mandatory departure for renewals could easily cost between \$5 million and \$6 million each renewal cycle.

"The bill, if passed in its present form, will undoubtedly result in costly litigation, and will likely be declared unconstitutional pursuant to the CNMI Supreme Court's decision in the case of Rivera," he added.

For these reasons, the Labor Ombudsman Office said it opposes the passage of the proposed bill.

roll in 2003, when she was actually off-island. Sablan used to be Stanley Torres' office manager.

Ada allegedly prepared fraudulent time and attendance sheets indicating that Sablan rendered work when she was off-island. The former congressman faces 20 criminal counts; Sablan, 30 counts; and Ada, 12 counts.

Hutton and Lemons charged Stanley Torres with five counts each of misconduct in public office, conspiracy to commit theft, conspiracy to commit theft by deception and illegal use of public supplies, services, time and personnel.

They filed against Sablan five counts each of the last three offenses. Additionally, the prosecutors filed five counts each of theft, theft by deception and receiving stolen property against her.

Ada faces four counts each of conspiracy to commit theft and conspiracy to commit theft by deception, and illegal use of public supplies, services, time and personnel.

Sablan and Ada appeared in court yesterday with their respective lawyers, Joseph Arriola and Edward Arriola. Robert Torres and lawyer Perry Inos represented Stanley Torres.

Edward Arriola said the absence

of the attorney general's name in the charging documents make them irregular, citing a constitutional requirement. Inos said the Constitution requires the attorney general to prosecute cases.

"We are left to guess whether these penal summons [are] sanctioned by the government," Inos said.

Joseph Arriola said the mandate of the Constitution is paramount over statutory provisions.

"The power to prosecute... is derived from the Constitution," Robert Torres said, explaining that power is vested not on the attorney general's office but the attorney general him- or herself—"that one person... confirmed by the Senate."

Torres said the requirement that Brown's name appear in the charging documents is a substantive constitutional requirement, adding that the prosecutors' practice of not including the attorney general's name in the past does not make charging documents against the defendants' right.

The defense attorneys want the dismissal of the charging documents. Hutton asked the court to review the constitutional provision together with pertinent statutory provisions, opposing the dismissal request.

NMC

From Page 1

Only 6 percent of the respondents said they want La Fiesta developed as a campus.

Further, 69 percent of respondents believe that NMC is not capable of accommodating the Pacific Gateway project at this time.

The project is a large-scale international student recruitment program that aims to generate \$150 million a year for NMC.

In the same survey, 42 percent of respondents said they support the project, 33 percent said "no," and 17 percent said "not sure."

Also, 59 percent of the student respondents said they understand the project and 24 percent said no.

Forty-six percent of them also believe that the Gateway project will help NMC with revenue generation; 24 percent of them disagreed.

The same survey showed that 32 percent of them "disagree" with the Pacific Gateway proposal, 57 percent agreed, and 11 percent were undecided.

Students cited that the acquisition of the La Fiesta mall at \$7.5 million last year was bad timing and there was "lack/poor planning."

"It was not well thought out. It's rush, rush, rush," one respondent said.

Besides, the student said that La Fiesta in San Roque is too far for both faculty and students.

The survey said the La Fiesta contract costs \$96,462 a month, or \$1.5 million a year. NMC officials, then led by board chairman Vicente Seman and president Kenneth Wright,

decided to purchase the La Fiesta shopping mall using a \$3.5 million federal money from the Governor's Office as deposit.

The officials, who are now both out of the college, committed the college into a \$200,000 annual payment obligation beginning October—regardless whether NMC uses the facility or not. The annual obligation continues for 20 years.

The project, which has a full backing of Gov. Juan N. Babauta, aims to tap international students, mainly from China, Japan, and South Korea.

The projects promises greater market exposure for the CNMI and aims to deliver needed revenue to upgrade current facilities, reduce dependency on public funds, and reduce local students' tuition rates from \$65 to \$25 per credit by 2007-2008.

The program was initially planned to begin in August this year, but the board, now chaired by Kimberly King-Hinds, decided late last month to put it on hold, citing current budget problems.

The existing board also decided to shut down La Fiesta operations until funding becomes available.

The college earlier said that it would need at least \$10 million to convert La Fiesta into a new campus.

At present, the college faces a \$250,000 budget shortfall by end of September.

NMC's spring enrolment totals 1,215.

The survey did not indicate a margin of error but said that the respondents make up only 10 percent of the student body.

CASE

From Page 1

res, one of the lawyers for the ex-congressman, immediately interrupted and asked the court to strike out from the record Hutton's statement, calling it "outrageous."

Hutton said that he has never written the name of the attorney general in charging documents since he became chief prosecutor within the office.

Superior Court Associate Judge Juan T. Lizama assured he would hear the case "fair and square." Before the hearing ended, he said he was inclined to grant the dismissal of the case, but chose not to give out a ruling yet.

"It seems to me that there's a personal issue. I don't want to hear that," Lizama said. "My understanding is that the name of the [attorney general] should be included in the [criminal] information."

The former lawmaker was one of Brown's vocal critics who had opposed the latter's appointment. Brown had just been confirmed to her post when the charges against the congressman were filed in court.

The criminal information alleged that Sablan received at least five checks totaling \$5,384.67 in government pay-

person that answered the phone said the school also shut down operations due to "no water."

A parent, who agreed to be interviewed by the Saipan Tribune on the condition that he not be named, said he is glad the school acted on the issue quickly and professionally.

"I understand the problem and I'm glad that the school handled it well. They were making calls notifying parents, and when my son came home, he had enough material to work on for homework. I know it's standard to close the school. They can't work without water or power. So everything is okay with me. No harm was done to my kids," he said.

KAGMAN

From Page 1

"It seems like this sort of thing happens whenever there's a power outage," she said. "There was a power outage this morning. I'm not sure, however, what the problem is. When the tank gets full, then we can verify what went wrong. We can check for leaks in the system."

Demapan said the Saipan Mayor's Office was able to assist with 1,800 gallons of water, but it was not enough, as the tank required more. Department of Public Works and the Fire Division were also contacted but were not able to assist.

Cha Cha officials were contacted but were not available for comment. The

Mass for fallen, injured police officers kicks off Police Week

By **SHAN SEMAN**
REPORTER

The Department of Public Safety yesterday honored police officers whose lives were lost or were severely injured in the line of duty with a special Mass at the Kristo Rai Church in Garapan.

Dubbed the Police Blue Mass, the event kicked off activities set by the department in honor of National Police Week, which began last Sunday and ends this Saturday, May 15.

“This Mass is for police officers that make the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty and for the ones that were seriously injured while in the line of duty,” said Lt. Pete Deleon Guerrero. “This is also for their families, showing them that we haven’t forgotten our fallen brothers in blue.”

DPS public information officer Rose T. Ada also said that the Mass was not only intended for fallen officers, but for the officers serving the community at the present time.

“This is an annual event that we take part in,” she said. “We dedicate this in honor of the fallen and injured officers for their valor and service to the community, and also to the officers serving today. They’re serving the community, trying to keep it safe for everybody, and we are asking the public to keep them in mind and include them in their prayers.”

Officers killed in the line of

duty were Officer Manuel F. Aldan, Capt. Justino T. Arriola, Police Officer III Abraham S. Quitugua, and Officer Gilbert M. Taisacan.

Officers injured include Marvin S. Camacho, Antonio S. Borja, and Jose M. Cepeda.

The week will also feature a Candle Light Vigil, which will be held this Thursday, May 13 at 6pm. The event will begin at the Mount Carmel Cathedral, with participants making their way to the Fallen Officers Monument at the parking lot of the DPS Headquarters in Susupe.

A Peace Officers Memorial Ceremony will then be held on May 14, 10am, at the Fallen Officers Monument. Capping the week is observance of the National Police Memorial Day, which will be celebrated May 15.

Gov. Juan N. Babauta signed a proclamation last April 22 declaring the week’s observance in the CNMI.

“It is important that all citizens know and understand the duties, responsibilities, hazards, and sacrifices of these law enforcement agencies,” he said in a statement. “It is equally important that members of our law enforcement agencies recognize their duties to serve the people by safeguarding life and property, by protecting individuals against violence and disorder, and by protecting the innocent against deception and the weak against oppression.”

Gun locks donated to Tinian

Tinian recently received a donation of gun locks for distribution to the public as part of educational efforts on safe gun handling and storage.

Leonardo Rapadas, U.S. Attorney for Guam and the Northern Marianas, together with May Blas from the U.S. Attorney’s Office and Cil Guerrero from Victims Advocate Reaching Out, arrived on the island to implement Project Child Safe, a cooperative project with the Governor’s Office and the U.S. Department of Justice.

They also passed out free gun locks—which they did for much of the day—to as many individ-

uals that they can find who own a firearm.

It is the first time that this project was implemented across the entire Marianas islands of Guam, Saipan, Tinian and Rota.

The purpose of the gun locks is to make firearms in homes safe, to prevent anyone, especially children, from injuring themselves or their friends should they come in contact with a firearm.

A good supply of the locks were left with the Tinian police department, so that gun owners who did not have time to pick up a lock can just stop by the Department of Public Safety and get one.

This is an ongoing project and in the event that the gun locks run out, the department shall still be receiving a supply in the future, according to Rapadas.

Gun-related injuries are the second leading cause of deaths among young people over the age of 10, and many of these deaths are suicides.

Many gun injuries occur in homes. Victims are often children playing with guns that they assume are not loaded. Children and adults should assume all guns are loaded and ready to fire.

Gun safety and teaching children to stay away from

guns should always be taught by the parents, as his father taught him, according to Rapadas. His father, a former police officer, knew the importance of gun safety.

“Remember that children are naturally curious; assume that they may discover your ‘special’ hiding place, which is where the importance of gun locks comes in. So if you happen to own a fire arm, all you have to do is bring your firearms registration down to the police department and pick up a lock. No matter how many you may own, it’s free,” he said. *(Joey C. Charfauros)*

Alleged knife fight Sunday lands two men behind bars

Two men are now in the custody of the Department of Public Safety after allegedly engaging in a knife fight last Sunday evening.

Police reports said that 25-year-old Pierre Rengil and 27-year-old Wilmar Peter assaulted each other at the Graceville apartment across from Kobler Mart in Koblerville.

Preliminary investigation indicated that there was a gathering at the area, and the two somehow got into a fight. Police were notified but, by the time they arrived at the scene, both suspects had reportedly left the area.

According to DPS public information officer Thomas A. Blas Jr., Peter and Rengil

later returned to the scene and again got into a fight with each other. During the confrontation, the two were allegedly armed with knives and assaulted each other in front of witnesses. The weapons were recovered at the scene.

The crime was reported at 9:16pm and authorities were sent to the scene.

Both suspects had moderate injuries, with Peter sustaining lacerations on his upper left arm and Rengil sustaining lacerations on his hands and fingers.

Both suspects were treated at the scene. They were both arrested for assault with a dangerous weapon and disturbing the peace. *(Shan Seman)*

Rotary donates to Yap, others

The Rotary Club of Saipan recently voted to donate \$500, and made additional donations in raffle proceeds and boxes of clothing to the victims of the typhoon that devastated Yap.

Rotarians also voted to do-

nate \$2,500 to the Joeten-Kiyu Library Youth Center fund; and \$2,000 to fund wheelchairs to assist the elderly, in their most recent instances of giving back Rotary fundraising proceeds to the community.

hyundai
cmyk

Business

Gas prices make biggest jump since August

LOS ANGELES (AP)—U.S. gasoline prices rose by slightly more than 10 cents per gallon in the past two weeks, the biggest jump since last August, an industry analyst said Sunday.

The weighted national average for all three grades of gasoline was just over \$1.96 per gallon on Friday, according to Trilby Lundberg, publisher of the biweekly Lundberg Survey, which regularly polls 8,000 gas stations across the United States.

Tight gasoline supplies and rising demand at a time when seasonal environmental regulations cause a price adjustment are responsible for increase, Lundberg said.

“Those regulations have both a cost and supply impact on refiners,” said Lundberg. “We get less gasoline out at a higher cost just when we need more of it. Meanwhile, tighter regulations make it tougher for importers to bring in additional supplies.”

The nation’s economic growth has also increased demand, contributing to the rising prices, Lundberg said.

The average price of gasoline has broken all-time record highs for two months straight, although the average price remains about 90 cents a gallon lower compared to the peak gas price in March 1981 when adjusted for inflation, Lundberg said.

Crude oil prices reached a 13-year high of \$40 a barrel on Friday, the highest since Oct. 11, 1990, in the run-up to the 1991 Gulf war. Prices for crude oil and for gas at the pump are unlikely to decline anytime soon, Lundberg said.

The national weighted average price of gasoline at self-serve pumps on Friday, including taxes, was about \$1.93 for regular, \$2.02 for mid-grade and \$2.11 for premium.

San Diego had the highest average price of any city, with self-serve regular selling for an average of \$2.25. The average for self-serve regular in California was \$2.21.

Gas prices in the metro Atlanta area have topped two dollars a gallon as seen in a gas station marquee in the midtown area of Atlanta, Thursday, May 6, 2004.

AP



Safety proposal may lead to side air bags

WASHINGTON (AP)—This week, federal regulators plan to take a major step toward protecting passengers in side-impact crashes, which are responsible for 10,000 deaths each year on the nation’s highways.

For the first time since 1990, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is expected to propose a new set of safety standards that vehicles will have to meet in side-impact crashes. The rules are expected to result in the installation of side air bags in all vehicles, since vehicles won’t be able to meet the standards without them.

When the sport utility vehicle she was riding in was broadsided by a Jeep Cherokee, Abigail Baglione’s head was hit so hard she was in a coma for seven weeks.

Baglione, 25, suffered a traumatic brain injury and spent more than two years in rehabilitation after the 2000 crash. What angers her most is that her injuries could have been prevented if the SUV had side air bags.

“The public needs to know that head protection in their car or truck is not a luxury. It’s essential,” Baglione said at an appearance in Washington this spring.

NHTSA administrator Dr. Jeffrey Runge says updating the standards could save up to 1,000 lives each year.

“This will be the most life-saving rule we will participate in my tenure,” said Runge, who is a trauma surgeon. “There is absolutely nothing higher on my rule-making agenda.”

For the first time, the rule will require vehicles to protect occupants’ heads as well as their torsos. The change is important,

since car occupants are at significant risk of head injury when they are struck by sport utility vehicles and other trucks with higher bumpers. In side-impact crashes between cars and light trucks, the occupants of the car are 20 times more likely to be killed, NHTSA says.

NHTSA spokesman Rae Tyson said improved crash test dummies make it possible for NHTSA to estimate the amount of head trauma. The rules also will require automakers to protect different sizes of dummies.

Once the rules are proposed, automakers, safety groups and others will be allowed to comment before NHTSA issues a final rule. It could take four years before the rule results in concrete design changes, which will cost manufacturers millions of dollars.

WTO exec: Quota phase-out ‘can’t be undone’

There is every indication that the final phase-out of textile and apparel quotas among World Trade Organization members on January 1, 2005, will proceed as scheduled, according to a report that came out in the *Financial Times*.

The report quoted Chiedu Osakwe, head of the WTO’s textile division, as saying this to the newspaper on April 28.

“It’s a deal that’s already been done,” the *Financial Times* quoted Osakwe as saying. “It can’t be undone.”

A number of American and foreign textile groups are trying to get WTO members to meet no later than July 1 to discuss a proposal to delay the phase-out for at least three years. However, Osakwe said the effort is meaningless unless it is taken up by a WTO member government, and “I strongly believe there will be no government that will table a proposal for an extension.”

Even if that did happen, a delay would have to be unanimously approved, a virtual impossibility given opposition from China, India, and other major textile and apparel exporting countries.

CREES

STAYWELL
+BLUE

Single-use credit cards fight fraud

NEW YORK (AP)—Cyber-space shopper Roger So relies on a 16-digit tool to prevent his personal information from being stolen: A single-use, disposable credit-card number.

When shopping online, the 52-year-old information-technology consultant periodically uses this randomly generated number—provided by his credit-card issuer, Citigroup Inc.—in place of his actual account information because, he said, it “gives me one more line of security.”

“I use it primarily with merchants that I’m dealing with for the first time,” said So, a resident of Morristown, N.J.

In recent years, credit-card issuers have been brandishing virtual account numbers as weap-

ons in the battle against identity theft, hoping to ease Web shoppers’ fears about fraud.

MBNA Corp. has offered this substitute card number—which typically has the same number of digits as a regular credit-card number—free to its customers for a couple of years. And both Citigroup and Morgan Stanley’s Discover Financial Services division are planning on enhancing features on similar products later this year.

In 2003, more than 214.9 million cases of identity theft, online as well as offline, were reported to the Federal Trade Commission, a rise of about 150 percent from just two years ago.

At the same time, a greater amount of money is being spent online each year, in-

creasing the potential for fraud.

By 2007, about \$104.5 billion—representing more than 5 percent of total U.S. retail sales—will be spent online on items such as clothes and electronics, according to JupiterResearch, a division of Jupitermedia Corp. in Darien, Conn.

By offering virtual account numbers, financial services companies are looking out for their bottom line. They’re hoping that these tools will give more consumers the confidence to shop on the Web, potentially increasing credit-card revenue.

Also, card issuers are betting that less online fraud means less money coming out of their own pockets to pay for unauthorized purchases. (Cardholders

are typically not responsible for fraudulent transactions.)

“Obviously, companies want to get those who are on the fence to shop online and those already doing it to do it more,” said Bruce Cundiff, an analyst at JupiterResearch.

These products are easy enough to use. If your credit-card company offers this free tool, you probably need to sign up and register your card at the company’s Web site.

You may have to download software to your computer, or, just come back to the site to get a new disposable account number before each purchase.

In general, the number can only be used at one merchant, whether for a single purchase

or for a service with a recurring monthly charge.

While the one-use numbers have been available for a couple of years, they haven’t yet caught on for many consumers.

“It certainly has yet to capture the majority of (our) cardholders,” said Jim Donahue, an MBNA spokesman. “But those who use it are very loyal to it.”

American Express Co., one of the first to launch a single-use account number in 2000, phased out its “Private Payments” product earlier this year.

“We didn’t feel that, on an ongoing basis, it was necessary,” said Judy Tenzer, an American Express spokeswoman. “There are already a number of safeguards for privacy and security out there.”

Since account holders typically don’t have to pay for fraudulent purchases, many don’t see the need to go through the extra step of obtaining a virtual account number.

The limits to virtual account numbers’ usefulness may also be an issue.

In general, online buyers need to be careful of paying for hotels or plane tickets with these one-use numbers, since some merchants require the actual credit card to be presented to claim purchases.

Still, even if you don’t save money by using this tool, you could save yourself time.

“If I didn’t use this, I’d have to change my credit-card number” if there was fraud, said So, the technology consultant. “It would be a hassle.”

Wi-Fi phones could be next trend in thrift

By ELLEN SIMON
AP BUSINESS WRITER

NEW YORK (AP)—Now that some Wi-Fi “hot spots” have grown into broader neighborhood “hot zones,” the next wave is waiting: Phones and gear that send conversations over wireless Internet networks—for free or at a fraction of the cost of traditional calls.

Mobile phone maker Motorola Inc. plans to introduce a device that would seamlessly switch calls from cellular networks to cheaper Wi-Fi networks wherever they’re available. Discount carrier IDT Corp. is testing consumer Wi-Fi phone service in Newark, N.J.

If successful, Wi-Fi calling would be one more factor decreasing calling costs and shrinking revenue at traditional carriers.

“The potential is enormous as an alternative to conventional telephony,” said John Jackson, a wireless-technology analyst at The Yankee Group.

Until recently, Wi-Fi phones were limited to businesses and colleges that could set up Wi-Fi in a building or a campus. Now, Wi-Fi “hot zones” range from a 100-block section of Spokane, Wash., to the Gare du Nord train station in Paris, broadening the market for Wi-Fi phone service.

“Hot zones are proliferating,” said Robert Schwartz, IDT’s executive vice president. “We think in some segments of the market, this could replace home phones.”

Wi-Fi phones employ a technology known as Voice over Internet Protocol, which translates conversations into packets of data that are sent over the Internet, instead of the old, circuit-switched phone system, for part of their journey.

The technology slashes the traditional notion of “long



distance”—just as there’s no extra charge to send e-mails around the world—and cuts out some of the access fees regional Bell carriers charge.

Wi-Fi antennas broadcast a high-speed Internet connection over the radio spectrum to computers within a few hundred feet. Because that part of the spectrum is unlicensed, free and low-priced Wi-Fi access has cropped up in cafes, bookstores and airports. There are about 18,000 Wi-Fi hotspots in the United States, and it’s used in hundreds of thousands of homes.

In theory, whenever people with Wi-Fi phones have access to a hot spot, they might have little inclination to spend extra on a cell phone call. That could terrify the cellular carriers that have spent billions building their networks.

The rosiest predictions estimate Wi-Fi phoning won’t instantly be a big moneymaker. ABI Research predicts the Wi-Fi voice market will be just \$20 million by 2009. By comparison, the five largest U.S. telecom companies had \$188 billion in revenue and \$18.7 billion in profits in 2003.

Still, voice over Wi-Fi could siphon business from



landline and wireless carriers already struggling amid intense competition.

Consumer long-distance companies like IDT see broad new markets for Wi-Fi phoning.

IDT sells 20 million calling cards a month, mostly to new immigrants who may not have their own phones. The Wi-Fi phone packages the company is testing would target the same demographic, with prepaid service, like its calling cards. Schwartz said IDT would expand the offering beyond Newark if it’s successful.

One of the leading Internet telephony providers for consumers, Vonage Holdings Corp., plans to offer a Wi-Fi phone for home use later this year. Motorola’s device is expected in the second half.

Phones from SpectraLink Corp., a Wi-Fi phone company that sells to businesses, range from \$400 to \$650. But the next generation of devices is expected to cost less—IDT estimates less than \$100. The company won’t disclose who made the devices for the Newark test.

IDT, which also offers home Internet phone service, is testing technology that would turn handheld computers running Microsoft Corp.’s PocketPC software into a Wi-Fi phone.

Internet-phone company Skype Technologies SA—launched by the creators of the Kazaa music-swapping program—already has introduced software that lets users do precisely that, for free, though Skype members can call only each other.

With big telecom carriers showing little interest in advancing voice over Wi-Fi, David Gross, a senior analyst at Wireless Data Research Group, believes the big test will be whether businesses adopt it, at

Corporate tax bill awards range of groups

WASHINGTON (AP)—It started as an effort to eliminate a \$5 billion tax break for exporters that irked the European Union. Since then, a tax bill has blossomed into a \$170 billion cornucopia of breaks for a variety of groups ranging from farmers and railroads to the cruise ship industry, former Oldsmobile dealers, NASCAR and makers of bows and arrows.

Typically, critics say, it is during the dark of night that lawmakers slip such benefits into bills like the one now before the Senate. This time, however, many of the tax breaks were added in full light of day.

The Senate Finance Committee chairman publicly disclosed most of them and folded them into the corporate tax bill, which Republicans are calling the Jumpstart Our Business Strength (JOBS) bill. Then Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, asked colleagues to support it.

“Keep in mind,” Grassley said, “that the JOBS bill could be the last train out of town this year.”

Keith Ashdown, vice president of Taxpayers for Common Sense, said it was an “in-your-face, ‘Here’s your special parochial pork barrel tax provision, now I want your vote,’ approach.”

“It’s brought down other bills, but in this case it’s kind of working,” he said.

Some of the additions have broad support. They include a new tax deduction for mortgage insurance and tax breaks for employers who keep paying employees called to duty in the National Guard and Reserves.

Watchdogs say lawmakers should reject most of the breaks.

Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., has reserved 20 amendments that he said he will use to try to strip some of the “pork” out of the bill.

“We’re going to have some fun amendments,” McCain said, also acknowledging, “We’re going to lose.”

McCain and others say the add-ons are too costly at a time of war and budget deficits.

“There’s only one party on

Capital Hill and its the bipartisan spending party,” said Tom Schatz, president of Citizens Against Government Waste.

The Senate Finance Committee maintains items benefiting very narrow interests amount to less than \$5 billion, not even 3 percent of the bill.

Schatz said the most outrageous of the additions eliminates a 12.4 percent tax on arrow manufacturers and an 11 percent tax on lightweight bows, while also reducing the tax on broadhead arrow tips. The cost to taxpayers is \$8 million over a decade.

Lawmakers with bow and arrow manufacturers in their home states argue that domestic producers lose out to imported bows and arrows, which are exempt from the excise taxes paid by U.S. makers.

Among the other additions that have raised eyebrows are:

- Sens. John Breaux, D-La., and Olympia Snowe, R-Maine, asked for a change that allows naval shipbuilders to change their accounting methods to get better tax treatment. The cost over a decade to taxpayers is \$310 million.

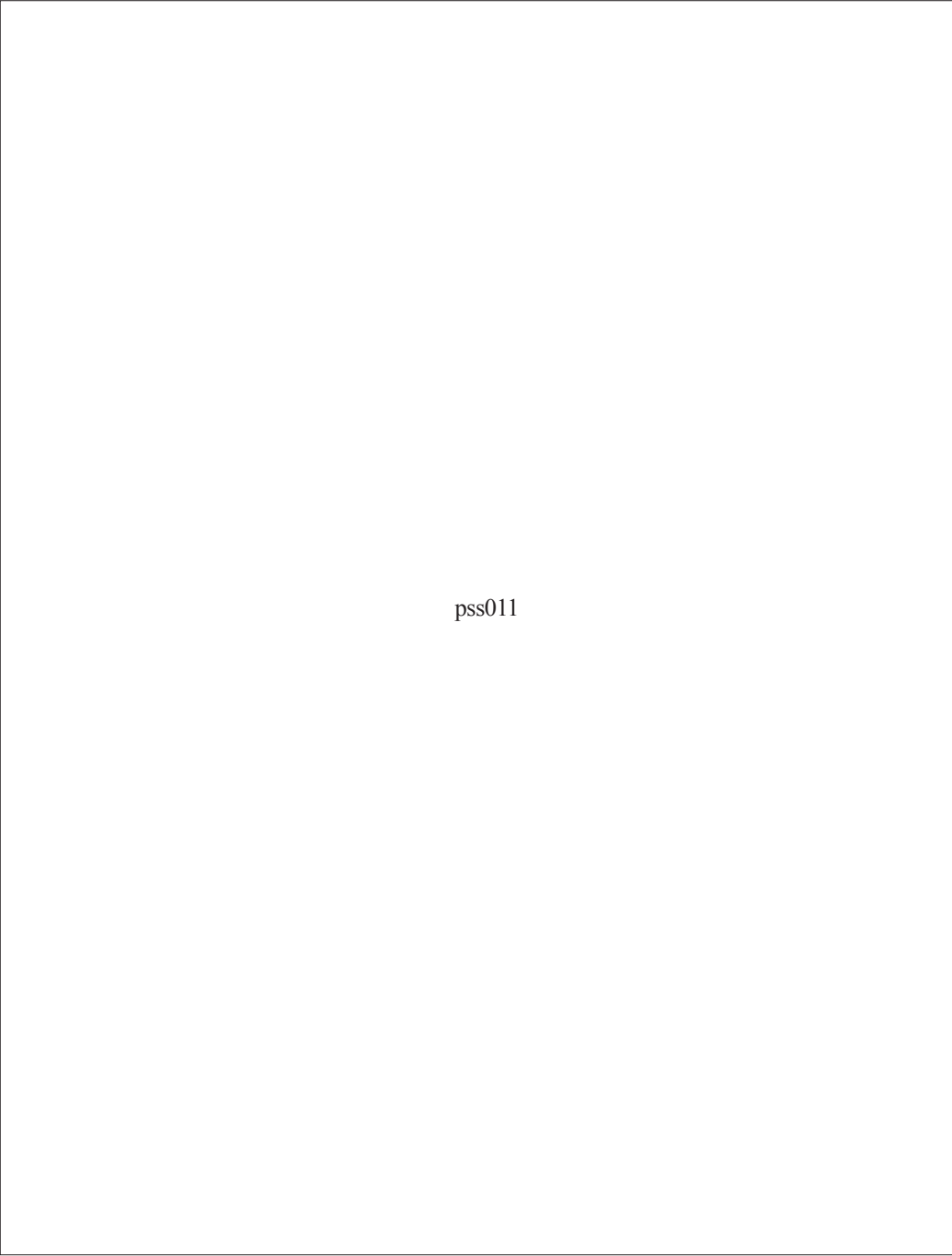
- Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., won help for dealers who sold Oldsmobiles, a line that General Motors stopped making last month. This provision comes at a cost of \$189 million over a decade.

- Letting NASCAR track owners write off the cost of their grandstand investments over seven years instead of 15 years. The 10-year cost to the Treasury is \$92 million.

- Delaying for the cruise ship industry its payment of taxes on the airplane tickets, hotels and other services sold in the United States as part of packages. This was inserted at the request of Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska.

- Giving Hollywood \$1.2 billion in breaks from a combination of incentives to produce small and independent films in the United States, particularly in states along the Mississippi Delta.

Nation



Asia

7 killed as Filipinos vote for president



AP
Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo casts her ballot at her hometown of Lubao in Pampanga province in northern Philippines, Monday May 10, 2004.

By PAUL ALEXANDER
AP WRITER

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Scattered violence hit the Philippines as voters cast ballots for president Monday, a race pitting an incumbent who strongly backs the U.S. war on terror against a film star whose close friend lost the job in disgrace three years ago.

About 230,000 security forces took up positions around the country even as officials reported at least seven people died in grenade and firearm attacks shortly before the polls opened.

The final surveys showed President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo pulling ahead of Fernando Poe Jr. But the polls also indicated that as many as one-quarter of the electorate was undecided.

Some people complained their names were not on voter lists so they were turned away.

“I’ll just go home. My vote was wasted,” said an exasperated housewife, 53-year-old Elsa

Quibuyen, who gave up without voting.

Filipinos also voted for a vice president, Senate and House members and local officials.

Officials said it could take a month before final results are announced because of a lack of computerized voting. One pollster plans to release the results of an exit poll Tuesday.

Poe voted early amid a swarm of journalists and was asked about polls showing him trailing. “It’s now up to the people to make their choices,” he said.

Arroyo’s administration and Poe’s camp have accused each other of plots to steal the election, either by cheating or violence.

There were concerns of terrorism as the polls opened. Last month, police said they broke up a terror cell, foiling what they said were planned bombing attacks in the capital.

Arroyo curtailed the last week of her campaign schedule, citing a possible assassination plot.

Poe’s friend and colleague, former President Joseph Estrada,

is on trial for corruption after being forced from office by mass protests in January 2001. Estrada was replaced halfway through his term by Arroyo, his vice president and political foe.

Arroyo, the daughter of a former president, is backed by the financial community, two influential Christian groups and considerable political machinery.

She is one of Washington’s biggest backers in the war on terrorism, has weathered two reported coup attempts and rumors of many more while dealing with terror attacks at home.

Poe, who has won the local Oscars five times, is a high school dropout popular among the poor for his portrayals of a fast-punching, straight-shooting underdog hero.

He’s been endorsed by former first lady Imelda Marcos, and Arroyo’s vice president, Teofisto Guingona, who split with her over her decision to allow U.S. troops to train forces in counterterrorism.

Also up for grabs are 12 of

the nation’s 24 Senate seats and all seats in the House of Representatives, and some 17,000 other posts all the way down to the neighborhood level.

The presidential election is the third since mass protests in 1986 forced dictator Ferdinand Marcos to flee into exile in Hawaii, where he later died.

There were reports of scattered violence:

Unidentified men hurled a grenade in front of the campaign headquarters of a mayoral candidate late Sunday, killing two people and wounding another in suburban Caloocan in metropolitan Manila, said police director Marcelino Franco.

Two shooting incidents in the south killed five supporters of local mayoral candidates, and a military spokesman warned violence could escalate.

Election officials also reported an explosion that set off a fire that gutted portions of a building and destroyed election documents in the central town of Taft in Eastern Samar province.

trb grad ad

Two foreigners killed in Afghan capital

By **STEPHEN GRAHAM**
AP WRITER

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—A blast hit a U.N. vehicle carrying election workers in eastern Afghanistan and two foreign men were beaten to death in the capital, officials said Sunday, adding to security fears ahead of the landmark vote in September.

Meanwhile, hundreds of U.S. forces were sweeping through an insurgency-hit southeastern province and had arrested 35 Taliban militants, a senior Afghan official reported.

Four election staff escaped unhurt from Saturday's jeep explosion near Grabawa, a village in Nangarhar province about 60 miles south of Kabul. Their driver was treated for minor injuries. All were Afghans.

"They all managed to get out of the car before it was engulfed in flames," U.N. spokesman Manoel de Almeida e Silva said.

Gen. Mohammed Yunus Noorzai, the Nangarhar police chief, blamed the Taliban or al-Qaida, but gave no evidence. Investigators were trying to establish if the explosion was caused by a mine or a remote-controlled bomb.

The attack on the U.N. vehicle came just days after two British contractors working with the United Nations in preparation for the presidential and parlia-

mentary polls were shot and killed in another eastern province. A spokesman purporting to speak for the Taliban claimed responsibility.

Saturday's explosion was the also fourth incident involving U.N. election workers this year.

The American military has warned that militants will try to disrupt the elections, in which U.S.-backed President Hamid Karzai is expected to triumph.

Only 2 million out of some 10 million eligible voters have signed up so far, and registration has yet to begin in three troubled southern provinces where militants have killed dozens of Afghan troops in recent weeks.

A U.S. Marine also died in a firefight on Saturday, but the military insists it had insurgents on the defensive and that it is safe enough for the vote to go ahead.

In their latest operation, American troops backed by helicopters began combing three districts of Zabul province, some 240 miles southeast of Kabul, on Friday, and arrested 35 Taliban militants, Gov. Khial Mohammed told The Associated Press.

"There was no resistance," Mohammed said. "All the suspected Taliban are in U.S. custody."

Lt. Col. Michele DeWerth,

a U.S. military spokeswoman in Kabul, said 13 people were detained and a weapons cache was found in a search in Zabul on Saturday but gave no further details.

Mohammed initially claimed the operation had netted Mullah Rozi Khan, who is believed to command Taliban militants in Zabul, where the government has little control. He later said that claim was based on incorrect information and that Khan wasn't among the militants arrested.

Meanwhile, Afghan police said two foreigners, one carrying a Swiss passport, were found dead in Kabul Sunday, killed by blows to the head with stones or bricks.

The motive for the killings was not immediately clear, but they sent a jolt through the international community in the relatively stable capital, which is patrolled by a 6,000-strong, NATO-led security force.

Police said early morning joggers found the bodies of the two men, aged about 30 and in Afghan dress, in a public garden in west Kabul.

Rudi Hager, the head of the a Swiss development agency which doubles as a diplomatic mission, told AP that it "was probably just a criminal case," and suspected the Swiss victim was a tourist.



Afghan hospital workers carry the body of an unidentified foreigner to the ambulance in Kabul, Afghanistan Sunday, May 9, 2004.

Afghanistan explosion hurts UN driver

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—An explosion set a U.N. vehicle on fire in eastern Afghanistan, injuring its Afghan driver, and three suspected militants were killed when a mine exploded prematurely, officials said Sunday.

The vehicle fire on Saturday morning came just days after the killing of three U.N. election workers, including two British security consultants, in another eastern province.

But the world body said it was pressing on with preparations for the September vote, seen as key to bringing democracy to Afghanistan after a quarter-century of war.

The U.N. vehicle was hit near Grabawa, a village in Khogyani district of Nangarhar province about 60 miles south of the capital, Kabul, U.N. spokesman Manoel de Almeida e Silva said.

Four Afghan election staff

traveling in the vehicle were unhurt, and the driver was released from a hospital later Saturday after treatment for minor injuries, Almeida e Silva said.

"They all managed to get out of the car before it was engulfed in flames," he said.

Almeida e Silva said investigators were still trying to establish if the explosion, which burst open the vehicle's fuel tank, was caused by a mine or a remote-controlled bomb.

"We don't know whether or not this vehicle yesterday was targeted," the spokesman said.

But Gen. Mohammed Yunus Noorzai, the Nangarhar police chief, blamed anti-government militants for what he said was a deliberate attack.

"We suspect Taliban or al-Qaida were behind this incident," Noorzai told The Associated Press, but offered no information to back up his assertion.

In Kabul, the Defense Ministry said three suspected militants were killed early Thursday morning as they tried to lay a remote-controlled mine on a road near Gardez, the capital of Paktia province some 60 miles south of Kabul.

"It seems that one of them was busy setting it up when it went off," ministry spokesman Gen. Mohammed Zahir Azimi said. A fourth suspect was injured, he said, but gave no details.

The two British contractors were killed along with their Afghan translator on Wednesday in Nuristan province.

The Afghan government has yet to release the results of an investigation into the killings, which the two men's London-based firm blamed on "local bandits." A spokesman purporting to speak for the Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack.

ASIAN Briefs

Tornado in south China kills two people

BEIJING (AP)—A rare tornado sliced through a town in southern China, killing two people and ripping the roofs off hundreds of homes, the official Xinhua News Agency reported Sunday.

The tornado hit the town of Qishi in southern China's Guangdong province around noon Saturday, the agency said.

The twister injured 85 people, many of whom were hospitalized, it said.

One witness described a parked car swirling into the air, then plunging into a rice field 50 yards away, Xinhua said.

The tornado tore down 204 houses and peeled the roofs off 270 houses, it said, adding that 462 people were made homeless.

Sri Lanka arrests 36 Tamil refugees

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP)—Sri Lanka's navy arrested 36 Tamil refugees for allegedly attempting to return home illegally from neighboring India, where they had fled during the island's two-decade civil war, the Defense Ministry said Monday.

The refugees were arrested for not having valid travel documents following a tip that they had paid 60,000 rupees (US\$600) to Indian fisherman to arrange the boat trip home, the ministry said in a statement.

Thousands of ethnic Tamils fled across the 48-kilometer (30-mile) Palk Strait to southern India after rebels began fighting in 1983 for a separate homeland for Sri Lanka's Tamil minority. According to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, between 60,000 to 70,000

Sri Lankan refugees live in 107 camps in India.

US detains 35 suspects in Afghanistan

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan (AP)—U.S. forces swept through an insurgency-hit province in southeastern Afghanistan, detaining 35 Taliban suspects, a senior Afghan official said Sunday.

Hundreds of American soldiers began combing three districts of Zabul province, about 240 miles southeast of the capital, Kabul, on Friday, Gov. Khial Mohammed told The Associated Press.

"There was no resistance," Mohammed said. "All the suspected Taliban are in U.S. custody."

American troops also found weapons during the raids, which continued Sunday, Mohammed said.

No Afghan troops were involved in the raids, he said.

Taiwan begins presidential vote recount

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP)—Taiwan began recounting 13 million ballots Monday from the March presidential election to end political feuding and suspicions of fraud that threaten the credibility of the re-elected president.

President Chen Shui-bian was re-elected in the March 20 vote by just one-fifth of a percentage point, or about 30,000 votes, in balloting that opposition candidate Lien Chan alleged was marred by irregularities.

Lien said he suspects the fraud was involved in the high number of spoiled ballots. But officials have said that strict ballot-marking procedures might explain the numerous invalid ballots.

After the disputed election, Chen quickly agreed to a recount to help clear up the controversy and urged the High Court to expedite the process.

The islandwide recount was expected to take 10 days, ending just before the May 20 inauguration for Chen.

SARS patient suspected of infecting others is released

BEIJING (AP)—A graduate student who investigators suspect caught SARS in a Beijing laboratory and infected a chain of co-workers and relatives was declared recovered and released from a hospital Monday.

The 26-year-old woman, identified only by the surname Song, was the first patient in China's latest SARS outbreak. She walked out of a hospital in the eastern province of Anhui "greeting bystanders," the official Xinhua News Agency said. She had been treated at the hospital since April 4.

Health authorities believe Song contracted the disease

while working in a virus research lab, and infected others—including her mother who died of SARS last month, becoming the world's first fatality this year.

All nine cases in China's latest outbreak are linked to the laboratory, raising serious concerns about safety at the facility. Experts from the World Health Organization have been studying the lab to find out how the disease spread.

Xinhua said Song had no fever—a key SARS symptom—for 15 days and is "in generally good health condition and her physical signs are stable."

A nurse who treated Song at a Beijing hospital also contracted the disease. She was declared recovered last week and discharged.

Severe acute respiratory syndrome first emerged in China's southern province of Guangdong in late 2002 and killed 774 people worldwide before an epidemic abated in July. More than 8,000 people were infected.

China reported four cases in Guangdong in December and January, but all of those patients recovered.

Health authorities quarantined 115 people who had contact with Song, but all have been declared free of the disease and released.

World

Chechen president killed in stadium blast

By MUSA SADULAYEV
AP WRITER

GROZNY, Russia (AP)—A bomb ripped through a stadium in the Chechen capital during a Victory Day ceremony on Sunday, killing provincial president Akhmad Kadyrov, the Kremlin's point man for efforts to control separatist violence in the war-ravaged region.

No group claimed responsibility for Sunday's explosion, which killed as many as 24 people, but suspicion inevitably fell on separatist rebels, who have made Kadyrov a top target and tried to assassinate him several times.

Police and soldiers launched an extensive search after the blast and detained at least five people, news reports said.

The attack harshly underlined the difficulties Russia faces in restoring order in the southern region despite a massive troop presence. It was expected to set off a new round of killing between Kadyrov's camp and his enemies.

The stadium's VIP section collapsed into a jagged hole in the explosion, sending up a plume of brown smoke. Panicked people, including many elderly dressed in their Sunday best, clambered over the bleachers as gunshots split the air amid the chaos.

Footage on Russia's NTV television showed men in uniform dragging away the body of a man resembling Kadyrov and covered in blood.

The explosive was believed to be a land mine, said Sergei Kozhemyaka, a spokesman for the southern Russian branch of the Emergency Situations Ministry. NTV television quoted an investigator as saying the bomb was made from a 152 mm artillery shell and detonated with a wire or timer.

The bomb was planted under the concrete floor of the VIP podium where Kadyrov and other dignitaries were watching ceremonies marking the 59th anniversary of the defeat of

the Nazis in World War II.

A second land mine was found nearby.

Investigators were trying to identify people who worked on the three-month renovation of the stadium, which was completed just recently, according to the ITAR-Tass news agency.

Official estimates of the death toll varied.

The Grozny emergency medical center said 24 people were killed and 46 others were wounded.

However, Russian President Vladimir Putin's representative in the southern Russian district, Vladimir Yakovlev, said six people died in the blast and 53 others were wounded, the Interfax news agency reported.

The differing estimates could not immediately be explained.

Russian authorities have blamed Chechen rebels for many attacks since 2002, including a Feb. 6 suicide bombing on a Moscow subway that killed more than 40 people and wounded dozens.

Previous major attacks in Chechnya have been followed by massive operations to find the perpetrators, with troops and security forces sealing off whole neighborhoods and towns, conducting house-to-house searches and detaining scores of people.

Sunday's attack was expected to send waves of fear through the Connecticut-sized region of 1 million people. Kadyrov's security service, run by his younger son, Ramzan, has been accused of being behind civilian disappearances and extrajudicial killings. Both Kadyrovs denied the accusations.

"Justice will take the upper hand and retribution is inevitable," Putin said at the conclusion of Moscow's Victory Day parade on Red Square, ITAR-Tass reported.

Later in the day, meeting with Ramzan Kadyrov, Putin called the late Chechen president "a really heroic person."

"Akhmad Kadyrov left this life on May 9 ... undefeated," Putin said.

The explosion also reportedly killed Khusein Isayev, head of Chechnya's State Council, and Eli Isayev, the region's finance minister.

The Reuters news agency said its photographer Adlan Khasanov, 33, also was killed.

"He was a fine journalist working with dedication and great courage in often-dangerous conditions," Reuters editor-in-chief Geert Linnebank said in a statement.

A top Russian commander, Col.-Gen. Valery Baranov, was in critical condition, with one leg amputated, officials said.

Russia's deputy interior minister, Col.-Gen. Mikhail Pankov, was named commander of troops in Chechnya, Interfax reported.

Chechen Prime Minister Sergei Abramov will become Chechnya's acting president, the Kremlin said.

Kozhemyaka, the Emergency Situations Ministry spokesman, said a second land mine was found near the VIP seats. An unnamed investigator said on NTV television that a bottle containing a plastic explosive was found in the stands, where it apparently was planted after the blast that killed Kadyrov.

Security was tight across Russia as the nation celebrated Victory Day, one of its most sacred holidays. In 2002, a bomb exploded during a Victory Day military parade in the Caspian Sea port of Kaspisk, killing 43 people, including 12 children.

Last year, a police officer was killed and two more people were wounded when a bomb exploded near the Grozny stadium.

Russian troops have been fighting Chechen insurgents for much of the past decade, with the latest war beginning in September 1999.



Kadyrov



People run moments after an explosion which tore through a stadium in the Chechen capital where they were attending Victory Day observances, Grozny, Sunday.

Chad, Sudanese militia clash, dozens die

N'DJAMENA, Chad (AP)—Hundreds of Arab militiamen from Sudan raided a village inside Chad, setting off gun battles with the Chadian army that killed dozens of fighters, Chad's defense minister said Sunday.

The attack last week—the worst such incident reported by Chadian authorities—is likely to strain relations between the neighbors amid efforts to end a 15-month rebellion in Sudan's Darfur region, where U.N. officials have accused Sudan and allied Arab tribal militias of "ethnic cleansing."

Sudan's president has ordered a committee to investigate the human rights situation in Darfur, an official said Sunday in Khartoum.

Meanwhile, hundreds of Sudanese militiamen riding camels crossed into Chad to raid a village, sparking a battle that killed 60 militiamen, a Chadian soldier and six Chadian civilians, Chad's defense minister, Emmanuel Nadingar, told The Associated Press.

"We have an obligation to protect our population and our border and that's what we are going to do," Nadingar said.

The fighting between Chad and

Sudan, however, has been overshadowed by what the United Nations has described as a major humanitarian crisis in Sudan's Darfur region.

The Sudanese militia has been accused of carrying out atrocities in Sudan's Darfur region, which shares a long border with Chad.

The fighting in Darfur pits Sudan's Arab-dominated government and a militia made up of Arab nomads against black African residents, some of whom have taken up arms to demand more autonomy for the western Sudanese region of Darfur, which shares a border with Chad.

On Friday, Human Rights Watch accused Sudan of driving more than 1 million black Africans from their homes during a campaign of bombing, burning and rape carried out by government troops and the janjaweed militia. Many of them have into eastern Chad.

U.N. humanitarian agencies are appealing for \$115 million for people in the Darfur region and another \$30 million for refugees in Chad, Egeland said.

Crash landing in Puerto Rico injures 13

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP)—A twin-engine plane blew a tire on landing and skidded off the runway at San Juan's main airport Sunday, injuring at least 13 people, authorities said.

One wing on the Super ATR turboprop, which was carrying 22 passengers and four crew members, struck the runway after the blowout, Port Authority executive director Miguel Soto Lacourt said.

The aircraft stopped on its left side in a wooded area and its wing was heavily damaged. Federal Aviation Adminis-

tration spokeswoman Kathleen Bergen said the fuselage was intact.

The 13 injured, including the pilot and co-pilot, were taken to local hospitals and listed in stable condition, he said. Some others aboard had cuts and bruises and ere treated at the scene.

The incident occurred at 2:50 p.m. as American Eagle Flight 5401 was arriving at Luis Munoz Marin International Airport from the Puerto Rican city of Mayaguez.

"It was a disastrous experience but

we are alive," flight attendant Luis Ramirez told Univision television.

The FFA said it was investigating the cause of what it called a hard landing. Soto said the pilot didn't tell the control tower of any problems prior to landing.

One of the airport's two runways was shut down but flights were arriving and taking off on the other runway.

The Super ATR has never had any significant problems in the region, said Gary Ellmer, president of American Eagle in the Caribbean.

Italian authorities break up Islamic cell

ROME (AP)—Anti-terrorism police arrested the Algerian cleric of a mosque and four Tunisians Sunday in a crackdown authorities said was aimed at preventing an al-Qaida-linked cell from sending suicide attackers to Iraq.

The suspects were seized in pre-dawn raids in three cities in the northern Tuscany region, Genoa's Police Chief Oscar Fiorolli said. Genoa, a northern port city, began the investigations that led to the arrests.

The suspects allegedly belonged to a cell of Ansar al-Islam, an organization based in northern Iraq with links to al-Qaida, Fiorolli told the Associated Press in Rome in a telephone interview.

"Their departure for Iraq was near," Fiorolli said. "We don't know where in Iraq they were going, but they were willing to be suicide attackers."

Fiorolli said the suspects' alleged intentions were learned through tele-

phone taps, and he indicated authorities decided to move in before the suspects could leave Italy.

"It was clear they intended to reach Iraq and strike Western targets," Fiorolli told reporters at a news conference in Genoa.

A private Italian TV report said the group had also been sizing up potential Italian targets, including a cinema and a shopping mall on the outskirts of Florence, but Fiorolli denied that.

US forces battle militiamen in Baghdad

By SCHEHEREZADE FARAMARZI
AP WRITER

NAJAF, Iraq (AP)—U.S. forces stepped up pressure on Shiite gunmen loyal to radical cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, pushing with tanks into the holy city of Kufa and assaulting militia positions in the narrow streets of a Shiite enclave in Baghdad. At least 34 Iraqis were killed.

Meanwhile, a bomb went off Sunday night at a Baghdad hotel used by foreign contractors, ripping through the bar and wounding six people, including British and Nepalese, a hotel employee and police said.

The bomb struck the Four Seasons Hotel in central Baghdad and tore apart chairs and part of the ceiling in the bar, where the six injured were sitting, the employee said. He said the bomb was placed outside the hotel.

Police Lt. Col. Ahmad Al-Alawi told al-Arabiyah television that two Britons, two Nepalese and two Iraqi guards were slightly wounded. Many Nepalese in Iraq serve as security guards for private companies.

The U.S. military also said a 24-year-old military policeman will be the first soldier to face a court-martial in the abuse of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison.

Spc. Jeremy C. Sivits, a member of the 372nd Military Police Company, has been charged with conspiracy to maltreat subordinates and detainees, dereliction of duty for negligently failing to protect detainees from abuse and cruelty and maltreatment of detainees, Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt said.

The court-martial will be held May 19 in Baghdad, and Kimmitt said it will be open to the media. If convicted, Siv-

its faces one year in prison, demotion or a discharge for bad conduct, military officials said.

The rest of the seven soldiers charged in the abuse likely will face trials where they could get more severe punishments—suggesting the military was starting the courts-martial with one of the lesser figures in the scandal.

The heaviest fighting in Baghdad came when militiamen from al-Sadr's Al-Mahdi Army attacked police stations and set up checkpoints in the Shiite neighborhood of Sadr City, a heavily populated district in the eastern part of the capital, Kimmitt said.

U.S. troops moved in and secured two police stations in fighting that killed 18 militiamen, Kimmitt said.

Earlier, an explosion tore apart shops in a market in the western Biyaa district. The blast occurred when police tried to dismantle two bombs found in vendors' stalls, witnesses said. Four people were killed and 17 were wounded, the Health Ministry said. Kimmitt said three people were killed.

"Is this the freedom that they want—people cut into pieces?," one man at the market, Fadhil Farid, cried. "What did we do wrong?"

At about the same time, gunmen opened fire on a U.S. patrol in western Baghdad, sparking a firefight that killed three Iraqi police, two civilians and one of the attackers, Kimmitt said. Fighters attacked another patrol in the center of the capital, wounding two Iraqi policemen.

The U.S. foray into Kufa was the deepest move yet into the city, an al-Mahdi Army stronghold. Several tanks pushed as close as 500 yards from Kufa's main mosque, trading fire with mi-

Iran Council passes law banning torture

TEHRAN, Iran (AP)—Iran's hard-line ruling Guardian Council has passed a law banning the use of torture, effective immediately, a judiciary official said Sunday.

The council, which rejected at least three similar proposals in the past, approved the law's Thursday—one day after Iran's judiciary chief ordered it, said Nasser Hos-

seini, a judiciary official.

"For courts, it's obligatory to implement the law after it is approved by the Guardian Council," he said.

Human rights groups have long complained about the use of torture against detainees, including intellectuals and political activists.

In November, a special U.N. envoy visited Iran and said he received

"many complaints" about human rights violations, including torture, from pro-reform dissidents, writers and activists.

Hard-line officials have denied the practice.

"I hope the law provides enough protection for prisoners who have complained about torture," reformist lawmaker Rajab Ali Mazroui said.

UK's Blair apologizes for abuses in Iraq

LONDON (AP)—Prime Minister Tony Blair apologized Sunday for any abuses committed by British soldiers in Iraq, and said those responsible would be punished.

As the government acknowledged it had known for months about claims that its troops abused Iraqi prisoners, lawmakers called for the publication of an International Committee of the

Red Cross report detailing many of the allegations. Human rights group Amnesty International said it told British officials about reports of violence and torture a year ago.

"We apologize deeply to anyone who has been mistreated by any of our soldiers," Blair told French television during a visit to Paris. "That is absolutely and totally un-

acceptable. Those who are responsible for this, if they have behaved in this appalling way, they will be punished according to the army discipline and rules."

However, he added, "The activities of a few people who have brought shame to their situation should not detract from the work done by the vast majority."

Sharon readies new Gaza withdrawal plan

JERUSALEM (AP)—Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on Sunday canceled a planned trip to the United States next week, saying he intended to focus his energies on patching together a new blueprint for withdrawing from the Gaza Strip after his party rejected his original plan.

Sharon told his Cabinet ministers during a stormy meeting that he will present them with a revised version of his "disengagement plan" in the next three weeks. He did not reveal what changes he is contemplating or how he would satisfy his deeply divided coalition.

The announcement was the latest sign of Sharon's determination to push ahead with his plan after its overwhelming defeat in a May 2 referendum of Likud Party members. That vote, though nonbinding, would make it difficult for many Likud Cabinet ministers to support the plan.

Sharon told his Cabinet he was canceling his trip to Washington, scheduled for next week, during which he was to have addressed the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, a pro-Israel lobbying group. He also had been expected to meet with President Bush, who had endorsed Sharon's plan as a valuable step to reviving peace efforts.

The original plan called for a full pull-out of Gaza, where 7,500 Israeli settlers

and 1.3 million Palestinians live, and a withdrawal from four small West Bank settlements. Sharon said the plan to disentangle the Israeli and Palestinian populations would boost Israel's security in the absence of a peace deal.

Vice Premier Ehud Olmert said Friday that Sharon still intends to evacuate all Gaza settlements.

Hard-liners in the government oppose any territorial concessions and some Likud ministers, who gave the plan only tepid support in the first place, have said they will not go against the party's decision.

At the same time, Justice Minister Yosef Lapid of the moderate Shinui Party has threatened to quit the government if Sharon does not push forward with the Gaza withdrawal. He dismissed the Likud referendum, saying that 1 percent of the population should not be allowed to decide policy for the country.

As Lapid addressed the Cabinet meeting, two hard-line ministers, Avigdor Lieberman and Benny Elon, walked out, participants said.

Lapid also got into a shouting match with minister Uzi Landau, a Likud hard-liner. Landau and his allies said it was undemocratic to ignore the referendum, and he said there was no chance the Cabinet would pass a new plan.

Israeli soldiers stand next to masked and handcuffed Palestinians after they arrested them inside a tunnel in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, Sunday May 9, 2004. The Israeli army said it had discovered a weapons-smuggling tunnel in Rafah, along the Egyptian border, in an overnight raid. The army said it had arrested a number of Palestinians in the tunnel.

AP



Venezuela arrests Colombian fighters

EL HATILLO, Venezuela (AP)—President Hugo Chavez charged Sunday that dozens of suspects arrested in raid Sunday are Colombian insurgents involved in a plot against his government.

Chavez said 53 Colombian right-wing paramilitary fighters were arrested in a raid on a farm earlier in the day, and another 24 recruits were caught after fleeing into the countryside.

In his weekly broadcast, Chavez said the suspects were training to strike at his government. He didn't elaborate but said the arrests were proof of a conspiracy that involved Venezuelan exiles as well as Colombians.

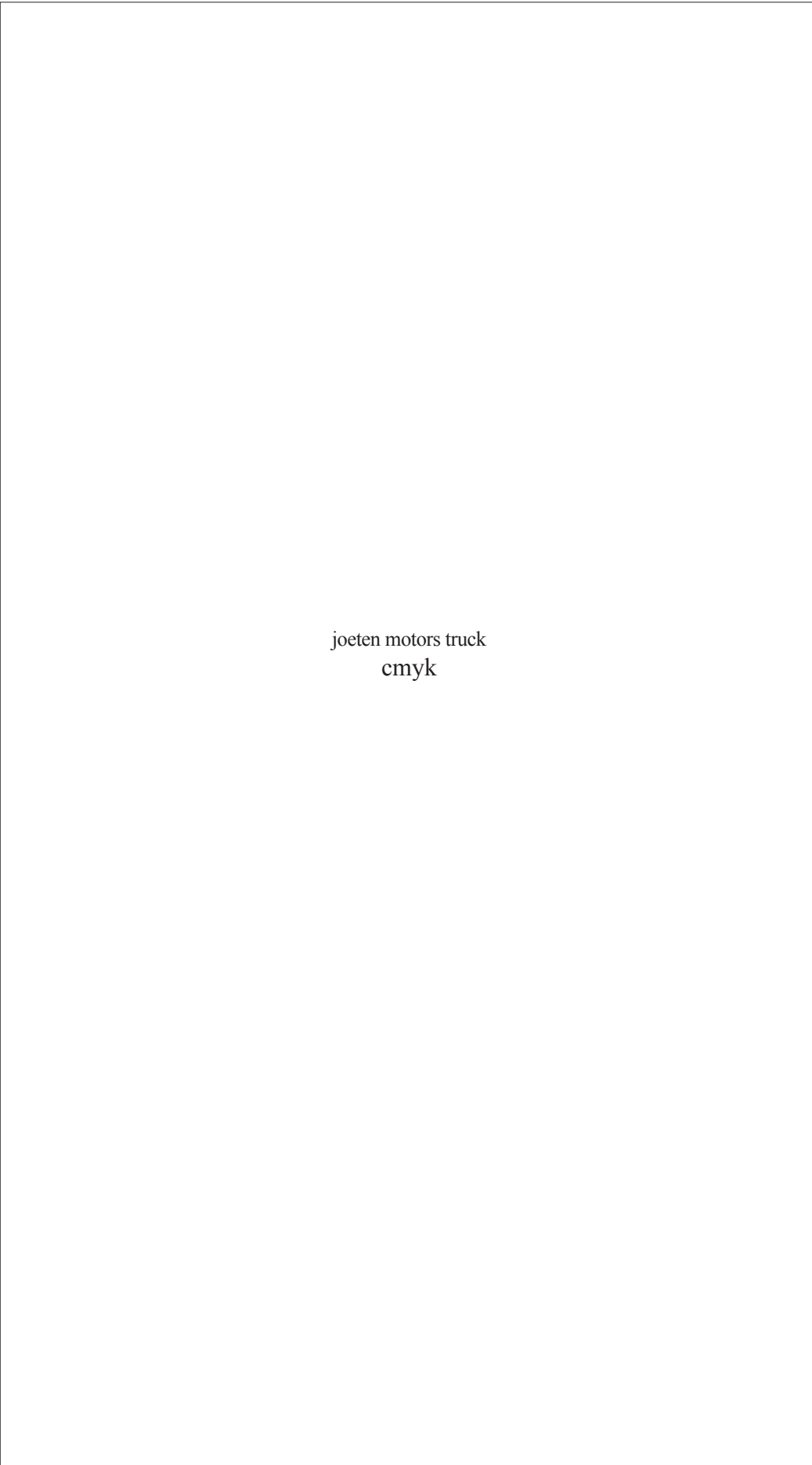
Chavez has frequently claimed that Venezuela's opposition, including a number of military officers who supported the April 2002 coup, have conspired to overthrow his government, with Washington's backing. The United States rejects the charges.

Opposition leaders said the raids were a government-hatched scheme meant to divert attention from their presidential recall effort. The effort to force a recall vote is entering a decisive phase.

Venezuelans are divided between those who accuse Chavez of trying to perpetuate his rule by moving toward a Cuban-style dictatorship, and his followers who applaud his social programs targeted to the poor majority.

Overdrive

T



joeten motors truck
cmyk

Life & Style

Esquire wins 4 National Awards to New Yorker's 3

By PETER CARLSON
THE WASHINGTON POST

Esquire, America's oldest men's magazine, was the big winner Wednesday at the National Magazine Awards, picking up four of the prestigious annual prizes. The New Yorker, the winningest magazine in the 39-year history of the awards, picked up three more prizes.

For the second time in three years, Newsweek, owned by The Washington Post Co., won the coveted prize for general excellence for magazines with a circulation of more than 2 million.

Esquire, nominated in seven categories, won prizes for reviews and criticism, fiction, design, and profile writing. The reviewing award went to Tom Carson, the magazine's former movie columnist. The design award was given to Esquire's design director, John Korpics. The fiction award went to stories by Arthur Miller, Stephen King and George Saunders.

Bill Zehme won the profile-writing award for a portrait of disgraced newspaper columnist Bob Greene, who used to write a column for Esquire. "This melancholy tale delves into the aftermath of Greene's firing from the Chicago Tribune for alleged sexual impropriety," the judges wrote, "and looks at how small choices and misguided actions shape, and maybe ruin, a life."

Esquire's editor in chief, David Granger, said: "I thought we had a chance to win one, but I'm shocked that we won four. I think it shows that Esquire is one of the few magazines for men that has range, that wins awards for serious journalism and also gives men stuff that's fun and stuff that's helpful."

Nominated in 11 categories, the New Yorker won for essays, feature writing

and public interest. Laura Hillenbrand, author of the best-selling book "Seabiscuit," won the essays prize for "A Sudden Illness," the story of her struggle with chronic fatigue syndrome. Katherine Boo, winner of a Pulitzer Prize while a reporter at The Washington Post, received the feature-writing prize for "The Marriage Cure," a story about two poor Oklahoma women enrolled in a Bush administration program on how to get and stay married, part of its effort to end poverty.

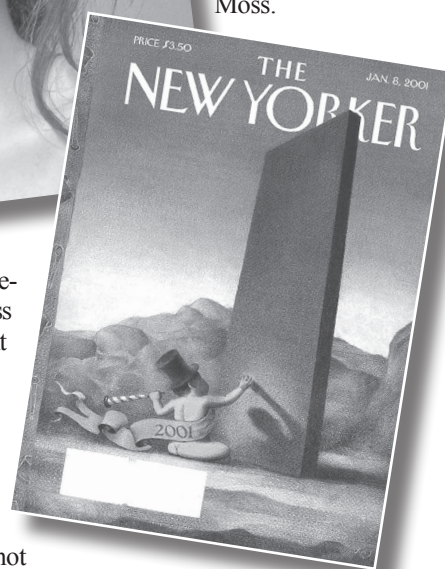
Seymour Hersh, the legendary investigative reporter who won the 1970 Pulitzer for exposing the My Lai massacre, won the public-interest prize for three articles on the Bush administration's Iraq policy. Hersh did not attend the awards, held at New York's Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, because he was busy working. Reached at his Washington office, he was also too busy for chitchat, even congratulatory chitchat.

"Yeah, I just heard," he said, sounding harried. "That's good. But I can't talk. I'm actually on deadline. ... What can I say? I'm glad blah blah blah, garbage, garbage, blah blah. But I'm working."

Which just might be the most refreshing award-acceptance speech in history.

Hersh was one of several writers honored for Iraq-related journalism. New York magazine columnist Michael Wolff won the columns and commentary award for three columns written from Qatar early in the war about the military's manipulation of the media. And Rolling Stone writer-photographer Evan Wright won the reporting award for "The Killer Elite," a three-part series about one group of Marines that invaded Iraq.

"In the course of myriad firefights, mortar shelling and ambushes, Wright won the trust of his subjects," the judges



wrote, "but he remained clear-eyed, depicting the soldiers' cold-bloodedness as well as their humanity. Brilliant down to the last detail."

The judges cited Newsweek's Iraq coverage in awarding it the prize for general excellence in the largest circulation category. Newsweek also won the award in 2002, beating out arch-rival Time, which has not won an award for general excellence since 1985.

This year's other awards for general excellence went to Popular Science, which won for magazines with a circulation of 1 million to 2 million; Gourmet, in the 500,000-to-1 million category; Budget Living, 250,000 to 500,000; Chicago Magazine, 100,000 to 250,000; and Aperture, a photography magazine, under 100,000.

Consumer Reports won the lei-

sure interests award for its "well-researched, authoritative articles." The Oxford American won the single-topic issue award for its annual southern music issue, which combines articles on musicians with a CD of their music.

City magazine won for photography. The fashion magazine W won in a new category, photo essay, for a 40-page gallery on model Kate Moss.

Men's Health won the personal service award for articles related to cardiac health. The articles inspired an attack of heart-related punning by the judges, who cited the magazine's "defibrillating jolt of service journalism" and its "palpitating photography" while concluding that "this package doesn't miss a beat."

Which was no doubt heartening to the folks at Men's Health.

Party set for Kaufman, just in case

NEW YORK (AP)—Andy Kaufman died of lung cancer on May 16, 1984, but according to legend, the eccentric comedian said if he were faking, he'd resurface 20 years later to the day.

So, just in case, a party is being planned by Bob Zmuda, Kaufman's best friend and partner, at the House of Blues in Los Angeles on May 16.

"Over 100 personal ads will be taken out across the country and abroad, reminding him of his words. Will he show?" Zmuda asked on the Web site for Comic Relief, a series of shows that raise money for health care for the homeless. Zmuda founded Comic Relief after Kaufman's death.

VIP tickets to the Andy Kaufman—Dead or Alive? tribute offer "select seating and celebrity reception (hopefully with Andy)."

The tribute also promises a performance by Las Vegas lounge lizard Tony Clifton, one of Kaufman's characters.

Kaufman was best known as the lovable foreign-car mechanic Latka Gravas on the '70s TV sitcom "Taxi."

NBC wants smooth transition from Brokaw

By DAVID BAUDER
AP TELEVISION WRITER

NEW YORK (AP)—Every week or so, a handful of NBC News executives meet to plot the schedule of a man who usually isn't in the room. They're planning for an epochal event in the world of television news, when Brian Williams takes over for Tom Brokaw on Dec. 2 as the anchor of NBC's "Nightly News." If only it were as simple as switching a nameplate over a door.

It's been more than 20 years since there's been a change among the Big Three of network news—Brokaw, Peter Jennings and Dan Rather - and NBC is leaving nothing to chance.

"The goal is simple," said NBC News President Neal Shapiro. "We want this to be the best, most effective transition in the history of broadcast news."

He's had more planning time than most presidential transitions.

NBC announced on May 28, 2002, that Brokaw would step down after this fall's election and be replaced by Williams. In reality, Williams, 45, has been groomed for the job for a decade, since he was hired from WCBS-TV in New York and installed as Brokaw's chief sub. For a while, it seemed "heir appar-

ent" was Williams' new first name.

Williams honed his craft by anchoring a nightly news show on MSNBC and CNBC, before he was reassigned as a nightly news correspondent this winter.

The idea was to make him more visible on the broadcast he would take over, give him more experience reporting big stories and, perhaps most importantly, get him on the road.

"He is running around like a political candidate," said Steve Capus, "Nightly News" executive producer.

Capus is on the committee that meets regularly, often in Shapiro's office, to coordinate the mixture of reporting, glad-handing and promotion on Williams' schedule.

"I'll remind you that we are a division of General Electric," Williams said. "They do nothing sloppily."

Particularly when it comes to a big investment. Evening news ratings are the most commonly used yardstick to measure a network news division's strength, and NBC has been on top since the mid-'90s. No one knows whether Brokaw's exit will prompt viewers to change channels to the veterans on ABC or CBS instead of trying the new guy.

No one who has ever taken over one

of the big network jobs can claim, like Williams, seven years of experience anchoring a nightly, national news program—primarily because cable news barely existed the last time one of them became available.

He's also entering a friendly, familiar environment. Capus used to produce Williams' cable news show, and his first job in TV in 1986 was as a writer at Philadelphia's WCAU-TV, where one duty was to take dictation from reporter Brian Williams.

So far this year, Williams has gone on reporting trips to military bases, to see how California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is doing, to do a story about steel workers in Pittsburgh, and cover election news in Iowa, New Hampshire and Florida. He'll have highly visible roles at the political conventions this summer, and at the Olympics.

He usually couples reporting trips with "campaign" appearances, visiting local affiliates.

A week ago, during visits to Portland, Ore., and Seattle, Williams met with the local news staff, filmed promotions with the local anchors, submitted to newspaper interviews and even, in Seattle, spoke to civic leaders at the

Hollywood pushing for stem cell research

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. (AP)—As President Bush resists mounting pressure to loosen the restrictions he placed on human embryonic stem-cell research, Hollywood's supporting role in the debate this election year is growing.

Celebrities including Nancy Reagan, Dustin Hoffman, Michael J. Fox and Larry King raised \$2 million for stem-cell research Saturday night at a gala for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. The money is part of nearly \$20 million that the foundation is donating to advance stem-cell research.

A Parkinson's disease foundation run by Fox, who suffers from the degenerative nerve condition, has contributed another \$10 million.

The star power is providing frustrated scientists and patients with additional muscle in a lobbying campaign against Bush's policy, which limits federal funding for research on human embryonic stem cells to colonies created before August 2001.

Stem cells are the body's building blocks and have the potential to become many different types of cells. Scientists believe the cells can be coaxed into specific cells to repair organs or treat diseases such as diabetes, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's.

Stem cells are typically taken from days-old human embryos. Because the human embryos are destroyed when the stem cells are extracted, the process is highly controversial.

Saturday's dinner featured a rare public appearance by former first lady Reagan, who renewed her call for an expansion of the research. Former President Ronald Reagan suffers from Alzheimer's disease and his wife believes stem cells might someday provide a cure.

"Ronnie's long journey has finally taken him to a distant place where I can no longer reach him," she said. "Because of this I'm determined to do whatever I can to save other families from this pain."

A growing number of federal lawmakers - including several staunch anti-abortion Republicans and party stalwarts like Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, who is also a heart surgeon - also are lobbying Bush to reconsider his policy.

Last month, 206 members of Congress, including several conservative Republicans, sent Bush a letter calling on him to reconsider his stem-cell policy.

The Bush administration said it has no plans to change its policy.

Still, Hollywood money is pouring in. Moviemakers Jerry and Janet Zucker have contributed more than \$50,000 to a campaign to get a bond measure on California's ballot that would provide \$3 billion in stem-cell research funds to the state's biotechnology industry.

‘Van Helsing’ wins box office over Olsens

By **ANTHONY BREZNICAN**
AP ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Dracula, the Wolf Man and Frankenstein stomped the Olsen twins in the first major box-office contest of the summer blockbuster season. The monster-hunting adventure “Van Helsing,” starring Hugh Jackman as a creature slayer, opened at No. 1 with \$54.2 million.

Mary-Kate and Ashley’s comedy “New York Minute,” a major test of the direct-to-video starlets’ theatrical prowess as they near age 18, debuted in fourth place with \$6.2 million—a weak showing compared to the

popularity of other recent teen comedies like “13 Going on 30” and “Mean Girls.”

“Mean Girls” fell to second place in its second week with \$14 million, while Denzel Washington’s “Man on Fire” continued its robust run with \$7.9 million in its third week, raising its total to \$56 million, according to studio estimates Sunday.

“Van Helsing” also earned \$53 million internationally after opening simultaneously in 41 countries, according to Universal Pictures, which released the movie.

The first-weekend ticket sales landed between director Stephen Sommers’ two previ-

ous monster smashes—“The Mummy,” which had \$43.3 million in 1999, and “The Mummy Returns,” which had \$68.1 million in 2001.

The movie received a huge franchise push from Universal, accompanied by a “Van Helsing” video game, an animated DVD prequel “Van Helsing: The London Assignment” and a “Van Helsing”-themed haunted house attraction at Universal Studios theme park.

“It’s celebration time,” said Nikki Rocco, head of distribution for Universal.

“New York Minute” failed to build an older teen following on top of the Olsens’ core fan base

of very young children. About 80 percent of the tickets went to girls under the age of 11, said Dan Fellman, head of distribution for Warner Bros., which released the comedy.

With more big-budget movies on the way, there’s a tense road ahead for most studios as costs have risen dramatically over the previously alarming \$100-million budgets of yore.

“Van Helsing” cost about \$160 million to produce and is the first of many movies this summer that approach or cross that budget threshold, from “Spider-Man 2” and the ancient epic “Troy” to “Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban” and the weather run-

amok disaster film “The Day After Tomorrow.”

The rising costs are risk for studios, since most summer films have only one shot at recouping a portion of their investment before fading away amid the competition. Most of the movies will have to wait until their home video releases to begin showing a profit.

“This is the opening salvo in the summer movie sweepstakes,” said Paul Dergarabedian, president of box-office tracker Exhibitor Relations Co. “The summer season is the season of the opening weekend. You have to make your mark right then at the beginning, because the next weekend audiences are going to be looking for the next big thing.”

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at North American theaters, according to Exhibitor Relations Co. Inc. Final figures will be released Monday.

1. “**Van Helsing**,” \$54.2 million.
2. “**Mean Girls**,” \$14 million.
3. “**Man on Fire**,” \$7.9 million.
4. “**New York Minute**,” \$6.2 million.
5. “**13 Going on 30**,” \$5.5 million.
6. “**Laws of Attraction**,” \$3.5 million.
7. “**Kill Bill—Vol. 2**,” \$3 million.
8. “**Godsend**,” \$2.7 million.
9. “**Envy**,” \$2.6 million.
10. “**The Punisher**,” \$1.2 million.

Amber wins ‘Survivor,’ and a fiance

NEW YORK (AP)—It was “Survivor” meets “The Bachelor” at Madison Square Garden. The country’s most popular reality game was thrown a curve Sunday night when one of the final two “Survivor” contestants, “Boston Rob” Mariano, pulled out a ring and proposed to the other one, Amber Brkich.

Brkich, who wore a T-shirt proclaiming her love for Mariano, quickly accepted.

Then her night got even better when host Jeff Probst counted the votes from the all-star “Survivor” edition. Brkich, of Beaver, Pa., beat Mariano by a 4-3 margin. She wins \$1 million.

It was a twist that seemed to take even Probst by surprise. Mariano said he had told his parents and Brkich’s parents about the proposal.

Brkich said later that she and Mariano had talked about marriage.

“But I had no idea he was going to do it in front of millions of people,” she told The Associated Press in an interview.

She said anybody who thought she won simply by flying under the radar screen was underestimating her. Brkich



Amber Brkich, left, winner of CBS’s “Survivor: All-Stars” is kissed by runner-up Rob Mariano as they pose for photographers after the “Survivor Finale and Reunion Show” at New York’s Madison Square Garden, Sunday May 9, 2004. Mariano and Brkich got engaged on the final episode.

said her strategy, and relationship with Mariano, was on the line for everyone to see.

“We didn’t even care who was going to win,” she said. “We knew we both had each

other for the rest of our lives.”

CBS’s two-hour special on Sunday, Mariano and Brkich were left after voting off two other contestants, Rupert Boneham of Indianapolis and Jenna Lewis, from New Hampshire.

Mariano essentially won his fiancée the prize. In the second-to-last tribal council, he had a choice of voting off Brkich or Lewis, and chose to keep his girlfriend beside him.

Mariano’s take-no-prisoners style during the game earned him his share of enemies. The final tribal council brought one contestant to tears as she described how he betrayed her, and led another to pull away his hand after offering a shake.

“You sold out your values, you sold out your character, you sold out your friends for a stack of greenbacks,” one vanquished contestant, Lex van den Berghe, told Mariano. “I hope it was worth it.”

Mariano, known for his swaggering demeanor and Boston Red Sox cap, called most of the shots in the game, which pitted some of the best and most memorable characters from the popular show.

Scorsese, Shore talk love of music, film

NEW YORK (AP)—Martin Scorsese and Howard Shore have both loved music since childhood.

Decades later, they’ve applied that love through film, though in very different ways—Scorsese as a director known for choosing rock, blues and R&B songs to create a mood or contrast with the on-screen action, Shore as the Oscar-winning composer of the “Lord of the Rings” score, a whopping 11-hour original work featuring some 200 musicians.

Both discussed the marriage of movies and music during the Tribeca Film Festival, which ended Sunday.

Scorsese told a packed audience that while growing up on Manhattan’s Lower East Side, he heard music pouring into the street through open windows—

everything from opera to Tony Bennett.

“I began to notice that music was scoring life,” the 61-year-old director said Friday. “Music would conjure all kinds of images.”

For 1990’s “GoodFellas,” Scorsese considered about 70 songs for the soundtrack; he ended up with a mix including The Shangri-Las, Aretha Franklin and Cream.

Five years later for “Casino,” at the moment when Robert De Niro’s character sees Sharon Stone’s character impetuously tossing chips into the air, Scorsese chose a specific section of Mickey and Sylvia’s “Love Is Strange” and shot the scene to the music.

“For that part of the song—‘Baby, oh baby’—he’s a dead man,” the director said, drawing laughs.

Among the other clips shown

during the discussion were the Last Supper and Crucifixion scenes from “The Last Temptation of Christ” (1988), which featured music from Peter Gabriel.

“It was something that you hadn’t heard in a film of this nature before,” Scorsese said. “It was the idea to make it immediate and to provoke. The only music that came to mind for me was Peter Gabriel. It was very spiritual and yet of the flesh.”

A rare occasion in which Scorsese used an original score was for “Taxi Driver” (1976). The reason: “Travis (Bickle, De Niro’s character) didn’t listen to music,” he said. “You had to see everything through his point of view.” (Bernard Herrmann’s score, the last one he wrote before his death, earned him an Academy Award nomination.)

Shore, meanwhile, won original-score Oscars for the first and third parts of “The Lord of the Rings” trilogy: “The Fellowship of the Ring” (2001) and “The Return of the King” (2003).

But he didn’t devise three separate scores for three separate films; like director Peter Jackson, who adapted J.R.R. Tolkien’s novels, he envisioned them as one comprehensive work, featuring the London Philharmonic and several choirs.

“What they were interested in was clarity because the book is dense,” Shore said during a discussion Saturday at the film festival, referring to Jackson and co-writers Fran Walsh and Philippa Boyens. “It was how to tell this story with 22 main characters and multiple cultures.”

wallace

Women tired of shouldering burden of bad bra design

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

DEAR ABBY: "Double-Jointed in Dayton," who complained about how difficult it is to buy a bra, touched upon a subject that has been my pet peeve for years.

Why is it that if a woman wears a 32-A and really doesn't need to wear a bra at all, she has her choice of white, black, beige, navy, shocking pink and turquoise, as well as plaids, polka dots and leopard prints? But if a woman is a 42-D (or more) and requires a bra every waking moment, she has a choice of—white.

The lingerie industry is missing out on a large (literally) part of its potential customer base. Sign me ...

THE WOMAN IN WHITE, LONGPORT, N.J.

DEAR WOMAN IN WHITE: When I printed that letter, I thought I'd do it as a hint to the lingerie industry. Little did I know that the letter would hit a nerve with so many women. My cup runneth over ... Read on:

DEAR ABBY: While you're on the subject of bras, may I add my 2 cents? I want to tell you how inconvenient it is for large-sized women—200 pounds—when our size is always displayed near the floor on the racks. Every store puts the small sizes at the top of the rack. Not only are the items we need hard to reach, but it's also hard to locate what I'm looking for while bent over. Thanks for letting me have my say.

BETTY IN SAN JOSE

DEAR BETTY: I agree. It is shortsighted to expect all heavy-set women to be farsighted — or limber.

DEAR ABBY: I am very slender and small-busted. Underwire bras hurt. Just try to find a 34-B that doesn't have underwires.

BRA-LESS IN OKLAHOMA

DEAR BRA-LESS: Do what I do. Emancipate yourself by using a razor blade and removing the wires.

DEAR ABBY: When someone asks if there is a "Satan," I always respond, "Yes. Who else would have invented women's undergarments and shoes?"

Truly, the manufacturers have no concept of reality when it comes to brassieres. Those of us old enough to remember the 1950s know what real torture is. That was the day of the bullet-shaped bra! No wonder the first act of rebellion in the women's liberation movement was the burning of bras.

RUTH L. IN FRESNO

DEAR RUTH L.: We don't have to look back to the '50s to remember those bras; all we have to do is rent an old Madonna video. She wore hers on the outside, no less, so no one could miss the point.

DEAR ABBY: I wish manufacturers would design something that fits real women instead of Barbie dolls. The strap adjustments are only the beginning of the problem. We women are not fooled for one minute as to why those sharp little hooks are always right in the dead center of our backs. We know it's to keep us gals from relaxing for even a minute. It's pretty hard to lean back and feel comfortable with those little devils fracturing your spine! I'm sure I'm not the only one complaining.

DISGUSTED CUSTOMER

DEAR DISGUSTED CUSTOMER: You're not. And if the garment manufacturers are reading, here are a few other tips from well-endowed readers. They'd like wider strap options, straps with better support and no elastic, straps that are placed a little more to the center so they don't slip off the shoulders. Listen up!

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable—and most frequently requested—poems and essays, send a business-sized, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for \$5 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby—Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included in the price.)



Dear Abby

Farmhouse in Grisham film to open in Ark.

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP)—The farmhouse featured in the film version of author John Grisham's best-seller "A Painted House" will open to the public.

Mayor Dale Dunlap said residents of Lepanto in northeastern Arkansas, where many of the movie's scenes were shot, hope the house will attract Grisham fans and curious travelers passing by on nearby highways.

"Lepanto being a small town out here in the middle of nowhere, the only thing we've been known for until this year is the (annual) Terrapin Derby," he said.

"A Painted House" is Grisham's 2001 tale of life in Arkansas cotton country in the 1950s. He was born in Jonesboro, about 25 miles northwest



AP

An old farmhouse near Lepanto, Ark., is shown in a 2004 file photo.

of Lepanto, in 1955 and lived on a cotton farm until age 7. The book became a Hallmark Hall

of Fame made-for-TV movie.

Many of the house's furnishings are from the movie set. The

interior is period-authentic, even down to the canned goods in the kitchen, Dunlap said.

'Green Hat' wins Tribeca Film fest honors

NEW YORK (AP)—"The Green Hat," about a middle-aged man coping with his wife's infidelity, took the best narrative feature prize and its director was named best new narrative filmmaker at the Tribeca Film Festival.

Liu Fen Dou of China wins a total of \$45,000 for the two awards, announced Sunday night at the end of the nine-day festival.

"All the winning works are titles being shown for the first time on this continent, and several of them were world premieres, including 'The Green Hat,' the clear winner as the narrative feature jury's choice for both best film and best new filmmaker," said festival executive director Peter Scarlet.

Two films shared the award for best documentary feature: "Arna's Children" of Israel, by Danniell Danniell and Juliano Mer Khamis, and Cathy Henkel's "The Man Who Stole My Mother's Face" from Australia and South Africa.



AP

Actor Robert DeNiro completes his introduction of musician and activist Bono who made a special concert address at a free concert in New York's Battery Park, as part of the 2004 Tribeca Film Festival, Saturday.

The prize for best new documentary filmmaker went to Brazil's Paulo Sacramento for "The Prisoner of the Iron Bars: Self-Portraits."

Jurors included actresses Mary-Louise Parker, Kyra Sedgwick and Glenn Close, documentarian Albert Maysles, former United

Artists president Bingham Ray and Queen Noor of Jordan.

The festival, now in its third year, featured more than 250 films from 42 countries. It was designed to help lower Manhattan rebound economically after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

Rehearsal forces Chang to miss 'Friends'

MIDDLETON, Wis. (AP)—Violinist Sarah Chang began studying music at age 4 and has performed with major symphony orchestras, but she's also a fan of pop culture.

Chang, 23, said she was frustrated when a rehearsal for Saturday's performance with the Madison Symphony Orchestra forced her to miss the final episode of "Friends."

"I'm staying in a hotel, so

I couldn't videotape it and I couldn't reach any of my friends to find out how it turned out," Chang told a group of Middleton High School orchestra students.

Chang said she is also a fan of almost every reality television show ever aired.

Chang's taste in music might surprise a few classical music devotees. She prefers listening to rapper 50 Cent and Carlos

Santana in the car.

"I have a hard time switching my mind off. If I hear a violin piece, I have to pull over and listen," she said. "So, when I'm driving, I pop in a popular music or a rock CD."

Chang said she winces when she enters a restaurant and the manager, as a gesture of respect, plays one of her CDs. "The last thing I want to do when I'm eating is listen to me," she said.

Donny and Marie Osmond's mother dies

PROVO, Utah (AP)—Olive Osmond, the mother of Marie and Donny Osmond and other members of the performing family, died Sunday. She was 79.

Family spokesman Ron Clark said she died of complications from a massive stroke she suffered more than two years ago. Her condition began to deteriorate last week and family members were by her bedside.

"She was surrounded by those who made her life worthwhile and complete," Clark said. "Many of her children were at her side. She couldn't have passed with any greater love and peace than existed in that room."

She was born in 1925 to Thomas and Vera Ann Davis in Samaria, Idaho, where her father was a principal.

She later moved to Ogden, Utah,

where she was a secretary at the Adjutant General Depot. There she met George V. Osmond, the soldier she married in 1944.

Both enjoyed music. George sang and Olive played the saxophone, and they passed along their love of music to their children.

Their first two sons, Virl and Tom, developed degenerative hearing losses that affected their speech.

Barenboim irks Israelis with criticism

JERUSALEM (AP)—Controversial conductor Daniel Barenboim angered Israeli officials Sunday when he criticized the country's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza as he accepted a prestigious Israeli award.

In his acceptance speech for the Wolf Prize at Israel's parliament, Barenboim said Israel's policy toward the Palestinians contradicted the humanist values on which the state was founded in 1948.

"Can a situation of occupation and control of another people be reconciled with (Israel's) declaration of independence," he said. "Is there logic to the independence of one people at the cost of a blow to the basic human rights of another people?"

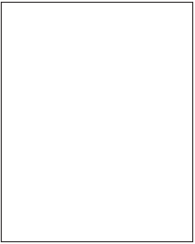
Education Minister Limor Livnat responded, to a round of applause from the audience: "I want to express my regret that Mr. Barenboim chose to use this stage to attack the state of Israel."

Israel captured the West Bank and Gaza Strip during the 1967 Mideast war. Peace talks with the Palestinians stalled with the September 2000 outbreak of the current Palestinian uprising.

President Moshe Katsav recalled the conductor's decision in 2001 to break Israel's informal ban on performing the works of Richard Wagner, Adolf Hitler's favorite composer.

Barenboim, who was born in Argentina and raised in Israel, is music director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and general music director of the Berlin Staatskapelle Orchestra.

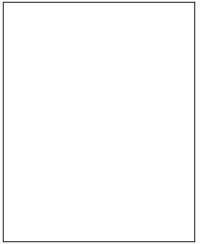
Pastimes



27

Saipan Tribune Sports

25



28 THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2003

SAIPAN TRIBUNE